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Embargo-busting boats auctioned

KUWAIT (AFP) — Kuwait has auctioned off five boats seized by the emirate for violating U.N. trade sanctions imposed on Iraq in 1990, the official news agency KUNA reported Tuesday. The Kuwaiti ports authority has sold the five wooden dhows along with tyres, car batteries, spare parts, electronic equipment and 9,900 bags of fertilizer worth a total of $1.2 million, the agency said. It is the first time Kuwait has announced the sale of boats and goods seized on their way to or from Iraq in violation of the economic embargo imposed after Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait in August 1990. Kuwaiti customs official HusseinAl Zaman said the proceeds would go to the foreign ministry. Mr. Zaman told KUNA that two types of boats generally violated the embargo — small oil ships and traditional wooden dhows used to transport goods..

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Government ready to work with opposition but within democratic practices and constitutional norms

By Yasser Abu Hilalah
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti said Tuesday he was willing to work with the opposition, whether inside or outside Parliament, to resolve outstanding issues, but warned that his government would not "accept any deviation from democratic practices and constitutional norms."

In a statement he made to the Jordan Times and Al Ra'i, the prime minister criticised the deputies who are threatening to boycott the Parliamnt session today describing parliamentary work as "a national achievement and any attempt at obstructing it as a "crime against the country and its achievements" (see story on page 3). Mr. Kabariti said the government sought dialogue with the opposition at the Lower House, "provided that such a dialogue will contribute to achieving a balance between the minority and majority and ensure that the executive and the legislative authorities would not encroach on each other's role."

Mr. Kabariti said his government had since its formation in February advocated "dialogue for the sake of taking decision, rather than dialogue for the sake of dialogue."

"Dialogue should become a national way of life and not an occasional or selective practice."

He said the government had benefitted a great deal from the ideas and thoughts that were expressed during the last two months over the issue of lifting subsidies on food and fodder, either in Parliament or in the media.

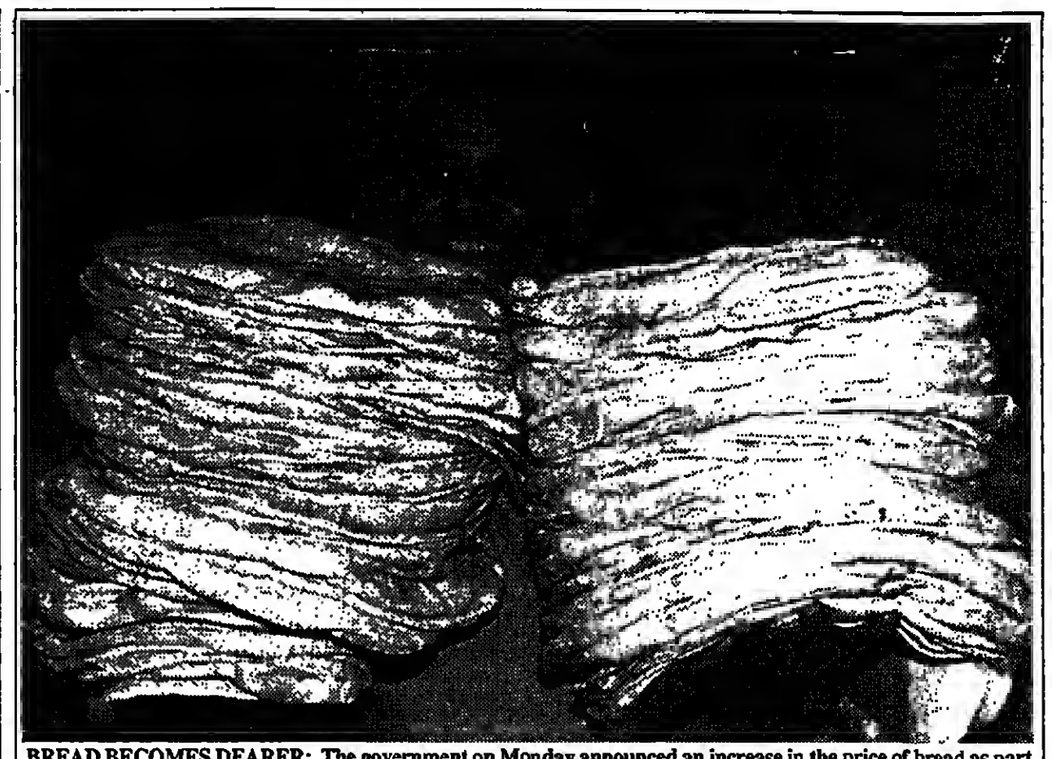
"When the government initiated the debate (over the bread issue), it was not evading its constitutional responsibilities or trying to apportion the blame for the consequences of the decision on others," he said. "The government sought the opinion of experts and opinion leaders to ensure that its decision was sound."

Asked to comment on today's House session, which 24 deputies threatened to boycott, he said: "We hope to reach a solution reflecting our democratic experience."

The prime minister belittled the significance of the deputies' boycott of the session saying that such an action would not help achieve anything, but rather will halt the passing of decisions and legislations.

Mr. Kabariti asked whether television coverage of parliamentary debate was a national demand and a central cause which does not allow for any compromises.

Mr. Kabariti Tuesday reported to the Council of Ministers on the outcome of His Majesty King Hussein's visit to Saudi Arabia and his talks with King Fahd.



BREAD BECOMES DEARER: The government on Monday announced an increase in the price of bread as part of a move to remove subsidies for wheat in line with the Kingdom's economic restructuring programme while also extending cash compensation to Jordanians to offset the increase (Reuters photo)

Raising bread prices — calculated risk no other government wanted

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — By officially ending the decade-old policy of directly subsidising basic food commodities, the government of Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti took what many describe as a calculated risk, which, the prime minister insists, is dictated by the national interests of the state.

The government Monday raised bread prices and lifted subsidies on bread and animal feed despite the negative repercussions the decision could have and against the will of even pro-government deputies whose alternative proposals to the move was rejected by the prime minister on the grounds that they simply do not work.

The government plan had to be implemented, argued the prime minister, and the risks entailed in it had to be taken.

NEWS ANALYSIS

FOOD SUBSIDIES were initiated in the sixties when the government subsidised wheat. In 1974, when the ministry of Supply was established, the government subsidy was extended to cover other food items, including sugar and rice, and in 1980, the government decided to subsidise milk powder. In 1985 the [illegible] chicken. As far as fodder is concerned, the Corporation [illegible] handling it until the early '90s when the government charged the Ministry of Supply with [illegible] fodder. The Ministry of Supply's balance sheets [illegible] have a yearly surplus until 1989 when the [illegible] JD 90 million in the early 1990s. On Sept. 1, 1995, a decision on rationing food items was passed. The first food item to be rationed was milk powder, followed by sugar and rice. The government then introduced for the first time food coupons, whereby eligible beneficiaries who meet certain criteria defined by the government continued to benefit from government subsidy of sugar and rice, in addition to milk powder. However, the subsidy dropped gradually until 1995 when global prices shot up, thus bringing the government's subsidy of food items to almost JD 200 million, including JD 105 million subsidy for wheat only.

Lifting subsidies was a basic requirement of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-sponsored economic reform programme on whose success Jordan has pinned its hope for economic recovery and growth over the past several years.

Meeting the targets of the programme, which ends in 1998, means earning the country the support of the IMF, other financial institutions and donor countries, in seeking foreign investments, loans and grants for the launching of future economic projects. Failing to do so would jeopardise the whole economic restructuring programme, government officials say. But proceeding with the programme poses a different set of challenges including risking a public outcry in reaction to increased economic difficulties.

The government, recognising that it cannot afford to sacrifice the reform programme, opted for taking the challenge.

In its short life in office, the Kabariti government had to tackle a number of problematic issues which brought it under fire from various political and business groups. But no challenge appeared as

(Continued on page 7)

Jeddah summit not only cleared the air but also set ground for strong economic ties, Muasher says

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein's visit to Saudi Arabia and his talks with King Fahd and senior Saudi leaders earlier this week not only put an end to all strains in relations that resulted from the Gulf war but opened the door for better political and economic relations between the two states, Minister of Information Marwan Muasher said.

"This visit has ended all elements of strain in relations between the two countries, and ushered in a new era of cooperation in the political, economic and security fields," Dr. Muasher told a press briefing Tuesday.

On the economic front, Dr. Muasher said the Saudi leadership has now agreed to open the door for the Saudi private sector, which for the past six years refrained from employing Jordanians, to take skilled labour and highly qualified personnel. This is a reversal of a political decision taken during the Gulf crisis to punish Jordan for its perceived role during the Gulf war.

"The Saudi government has so far contracted 2,500 Jordanians, mostly teachers, to work in the Saudi public sector," he said. "What is new is that the Saudis will now open the doors of the private sector for us."

The Saudis, who have so far refrained from importing Jordanian agricultural produce because they said it did not meet Saudi standards, are expected to open their markets for Jordanian vegetables and fruits as well.

"We presented the Saudis with a technical report prepared by American experts that testifies to the safety of Jordanian agricultural produce," Dr. Muasher said.

He said that signs of the improved relations have been in evidence throughout the past six months.

"During the past six months of this year Saudi imports from Jordan totalled JD 54 million compared to JD 26 million in the same period of last year."

Dr. Muasher also predicted that problems that hamper transit Jordanian traffic, especially truck transiting Saudi Arabia to the Gulf, will be resolved soon.

Dr. Muasher said that the two countries' leadership agreed to enhance cooperation in the field of security," which was always good anyway."

Recent news reports spoke of Jordan providing the Saudi authorities with information related to the June 25 explosion at a U.S. base in Saudi Arabia in which 19 American servicemen were killed and more than 100 injured. Last year the Jordanian authorities arrested a Palestinian Islamist, Abu Mohammad Al Maqdisi, who is described as the godfather for four Saudis convicted and beheaded for a November 1995 explosion at a U.S. base in the Saudi capital Riyadh in which four Americans and two Indians were killed.

On the political front, Dr. Muasher said the Saudi leadership "fully understood and appreciated the Jordanian position on the peace process." He did not elaborate, but another senior official involved in the negotiations with the Saudis and the talks that Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu held here last week told the Jordan Times that King Hussein and Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti briefed the Saudis on the Jordanian efforts to keep the peace process alive and going forward.

According to this official, who did not wish to be identified, the Saudis were particularly impressed with the way Jordanians were keeping their channels open with all the parties to the peace process, and the influence the Jordanian leadership is exerting on Mr. Netanyahu.

The official said that during Mr. Netanyahu's visit to Jordan last week, the Jordanians were able to get a commitment from the Israeli prime minister "to heed Jordanian water complaints, and a pledge to open the Israeli and Palestinian markets to Jordanian produce."

The official said accordingly Jordan was hoping to export $200 million-worth of products to Israel and the Palestinian territories. As for water, the official said the Israelis promised Jordan they would provide the Kingdom with a significant amount of water as stipulated by the peace treaty signed between the two countries in 1994. According to the treaty, Israel should have provided the Kingdom with 50 million cubic metres of water within a year of the treaty signing from available sources.

As for Jordanians in Israeli jails the official said three prisoners would be released soon. The case of another 15, he said, is difficult since they were convicted of murder and jailed for life.

No summit to discuss northern Iraq — Ciller

ANKARA (Agencies) — Turkey is not planning a regional summit on northern Iraq, Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller said Tuesday, contradicting a proposal reportedly made by Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan during his visit to Iran.

According to the proposal mooted in Tehran, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey would hold a security summit over the issue of northern Iraq, where ethnic Kurds have been enjoying international protection since the end of the Gulf war in 1991.

"There's no question of a four-way summit on northern Iraq. Such a subject is not on the agenda" of Turkey, said Mrs. Ciller, who is acting prime minister while Mr. Erbakan is away on a five-nation Asian tour.

Also Tuesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati cast doubt on the idea of Iraq attending such a summit, saying: "Participation of Iraq should be contingent upon the approval of the three main members (of the security committee): Iran, Turkey and Syria."

Turkey, Iran and Syria — all three of which have Kurdish minorities — have had ministerial-level meetings twice a year since November 1992 on the situation in northern Iraq, fearing that a power vacuum there will lead to the creation of a Kurdish state.

Iraq's Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan on Tuesday met two Turkish ministers and called for enhancing bilateral relations, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) said.

"Ramadan stressed during the meeting the importance of improving relations between the two neighbouring countries and bring them to the level that they were at in the past," INA said.

Turkey's Justice Minister Sevket Kazan and Education Minister Mehmet Saglam, the first Turkish officials to visit Iraq for six years, arrived in Baghdad on Monday for talks to improve relations soured during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis.

"The Turkish delegation's visit will contribute to finding new channels of cooperation...and will be a strong base for strategic ties in the future," Mr. Ramadan was quoted as saying.

The agency said Mr. Kazan "stressed his country's keeness to establish progressing relations with Iraq based on the two peoples' interests."

Turkey was a key ally of the American-led military coalition that ejected Iraqi troops from Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf war.

Kabariti: Door open for Kuwait reconciliation

KUWAIT (Agencies) — This week's Saudi-Jordanian summit has opened the door for reconciliation between Jordan and Kuwait, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti was quoted Tuesday as saying.

"The Saudi-Jordanian summit will no doubt contribute to normalisation of relations between Jordan and its brethren in the Gulf countries, including Kuwait," Mr. Kabariti told the new Al Rai Al Amm daily.

The door opened by the Sunday meeting in Jeddah between King Hussein and King Fahd, the first in six years, "will never be shut again."

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, enjoys considerable influence in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council, an economic and political alliance which also groups Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain.

It was the base of the U.S.-led coalition force which threw Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. Kuwait's cabinet also made the neighbouring kingdom its temporary home in exile during Iraq's seven-month occupation of the emirate.

The governments of Kuwait and Jordan have been slowly moving back towards normalising ties with Amman.

Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, Kuwait's foreign minister, believes closer ties with Jordan will further isolate the Iraqi government, which remains under crippling U.N. sanctions imposed after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

He told the opposition-dominated parliament earlier this year that Kuwait was "a small country which wants to make friends not enemies."

But most of the house's 50 lawmakers cannot accept reconciliation with Jordan.

On Tuesday Sheikh Sabah said the pace of normalisation of ties will be slow.

"There is not yet a precise date for this normalisation," said Sheikh Sabah in reaction to comments made by Mr. Kabariti.

Jordan's embassy in Kuwait has been closed since the Gulf crisis, while Kuwait's diplomatic mission in Amman is headed by a charge d'affaires.

Sheikh Sabah told reporters Tuesday that no date has been set for normalising ties, but he shared Mr. Kabariti's optimism.

The Kuwaiti minister said Mr. Kabariti's comments were "simply suggestions and we share (the hopes) of Mr. Kabariti" for a reconciliation.

Peres, Palestinians warn settlement expansion will kill peace process

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinian officials and Israel's former leader warned Tuesday that expanding Jewish settlements in the West Bank will kill the peace process and turn Israel into a binational state living in perpetual strife.

This is a new breach for what had been agreed upon and what had been signed," Palestine President Yasser Arafat told reporters in Gaza.

The Israeli defence ministry said on Monday that Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai approved placing 298 mobile homes in Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for public and educational use ahead of the schnol year.

It said 115 mobile homes would be placed at educational institutions, 100 at a vocational school in the Ariel settlement and 83 at public institutions.

"If the Israelis' policy toward settlements will continue, I can assure that there will be no peace," Palestinian Parliament Speaker Ahmed Qouriea told the Associated Press.

Earlier Tuesday, officials confirmed that Uri Ariel, a key settler leader, will be named as a government coordinator for settlement construction in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Mr. Ariel refused comment.

Mr. Ariel, the officials said, is to work in the defence ministry, which reportedly plans to simplify the procedure for approving new construction in the settlements.

The Maariv daily said settler leaders have put forward some 200 plans for building thousands of homes.

Michael Eitan, head of the ruling Likud party faction in parliament, said Israel planned to settle many more Jews in the West Bank and Gaza. "There will be new neighbourhoods (in the settlements) and many Jews will come and live there," Mr. Eitan said.

On Monday, the government announced 15 million shekels ($5 million) in aid to the settlers and Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu said he planned to build more roads in the West Bank.

The new focus on settlements reflects the reversal in Israel's policies since Mr. Netanyahu's May election victory over Shimon Peres, the architect of the autonomy agreements with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Addressing a special meeting of parliament Tuesday, Mr. Peres said the settlement activity would lead to a de facto annexation of the West Bank and Gaza.

A reversal of that disengagement process would endanger the Jewish majority in Israel, Mr. Peres said. "It is possible to settle. The question is whether it is desirable, whether you want (to) turn Israel into a binational state."

Saddam executed 122 army officers, opposition reports

DUBAI (AFP) — The Iraqi opposition accused President Saddam Hussein Tuesday of executing dozens of army officers at a time when Baghdad is trying to win back its place in the international community through its oil-for-food deal with the United Nations.

The Iraqi National Accord, based in Jordan, said 122 senior Iraqi army officers accused of plotting against President Saddam were executed between Aug. 1 and 3.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) said 10 Iraqi officers from the elite Republican Guards had been executed "in the last few days" for their part in a failed coup attempt in July.

The Tehran-based Shiite Muslim opposition group said President Saddam's son Uday "supervised" the execution of the officers who included two generals, two colonels and two commanders.

SCIRI announced last month that a coup backed by the United States and Jordan was thwarted in Baghdad, a claim denied by Amman.

Reports of repression, firing squads and the arrest of soldiers have been circulating in opposition circles for more than a month, but there has been no official comment from Baghdad which generally remains tight-lipped on such matters.

A first bid to overthrow President Saddam took place on June 27 at Al Rashid air base where pilots had planned to bomb the presidential palace, opposition groups said.

A second coup attempt took place on July 20 at Habbaniye, west of Baghdad, but the plot was uncovered and its leader Major Fawzi Karim Al Hamdani arrested, according to the Iraqi National Accord.

The Iraqi National Congress, an opposition coalition, said on July 11 that at least 120 army officers had been arrested for plotting against the regime. Dozens have since been executed on President Saddam's orders, it said.

An Iraqi National Accord official said Wednesday that the most senior of the 122 executed officers for plotting against President Saddam was General Abdul Motlek Al Juburi, from the northern town of Mosul, a "hero" of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

Gen. Juburi was first arrested by the authorities in 1991, but then released under an amnesty in July 1995 before being picked up again last month as part of a sweep within the ranks of the Iraqi armed forces, the official said.

Iraq, which has been under U.N. sanctions since its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait, is trying to renew contacts with the international community after the conclusion of an oil-for-food deal on may 20.

Under the deal, the Iraqi government will be allowed to resume limited oil exports for the first time since 1990 in exchange for food and medicine.

"Iraq will take up its role again in the international community and there is a worldwide willingness to deal with it," the ruling Baath Party newspaper Al Thawra wrote this week. However, concern over increased repression were raised Tuesday before the U.N.'s human rights subcommittee in Geneva.

SCIRI representative Ali Ali Al Adhadh told the committee of heavy artillery attacks on southern marshland areas of Iraq populated mainly by Shiite Muslims, which he said left several dead late last month.

But an Iraqi government representative fired back against what he called the political agenda of some organisations "which stir up tension to maintain the blockade" and "distract attention from the responsibility of states who are starving the Iraqi population."

Afghan faction denies ceasefire with Kabul

ISLAMABAD (Agencies) — Northern Afghanistan's Jumbish-e-Milli movement of opposition warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum on Tuesday denied reaching a formal truce with President Burhanuddin Rabbani's government.

But a Jumbish spokesman in Islamabad, Abdul Baqi Turkistani, said that fighting had ceased between forces loyal to Mr. Rabbani and a Jumbish led supreme coordination council alliance while a government envoy was in the northern town of Mazar-e-Sharif with peace proposals.

He made the comments when asked about a broadcast by official Kabul Radio on Monday night that the government had reached a ceasefire with the council effective from 8.00 a.m. (0530 GMT) on Tuesday "throughout northern areas."

"There is no ceasefire, but there is also no fighting," Mr. Turkistani said.

He said an envoy of Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Humayun Jarir, was in Mazar-e-Sharif with an offer to the three-party coordination council to join the government.

Bnt he said the council had its conditions, including a transfer of power from Mr. Rabbani, the formation of a government acceptable to all factions and ethnic groups, a neutral force to control Kabul and subseqoent elections.

No agreement has been reached and the talks were continuing, Mr. Turkistani said.

Jumbish, which says it controls seven northern provinces, has been in confrontation with the Kabul government since January 1994 when it switched sides to join with the then opposition Hezb-e-Islami faction of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

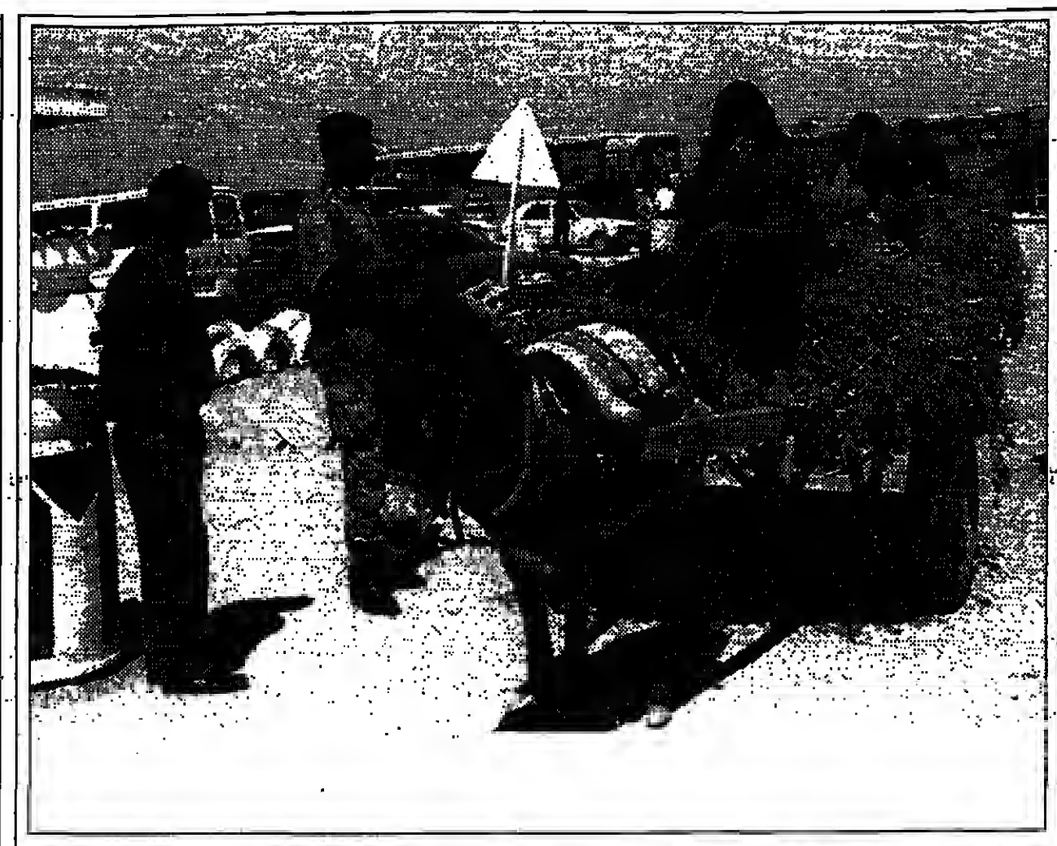
Mr. Hekmatyar rejoined the government as prime minister in late June under a peace pact with Mr. Rabbani, whose capital is also besieged by the powerful Talehan militia.

Monday's Kabul Radio broadcast said the truce followed talks which Mr. Hekmatyar's delegation had held with the coordination council, inviting it to join the government and to open the Salang highway to Central Asia that is controlled by Gen. Dostum's forces.

The broadcast said the truce would be respected until the conclusion of the talks and that both sides would refrain from hostile propaganda against each other.

The coordination council has so far rejected Mr. Hekmatyar's urgings to join the government. Instead, its three parties joined two other factions last month in a new front to work for a transfer of power from Mr. Rabbani.

The purported ceasefire came as Mr. Hekmatyar battles to assert his authority and win the support of the Afghan public.



LIFE CONTINUES: Three Palestinian women ride their donkey-carts past Palestinian police on guard near the Rafah border on Tuesday. The carts are laden with wild grass the women have gathered to feed their sheep. The Gaza Strip and the West Bank remain under an Israeli blockade imposed in February, with the bulk of the Palestinians there not allowed to enter the Jewish state (Reuters photo)

Progress in Gaza — homegrown television melodrama at last

The Associated Press

GAZA CITY — Ayouh Akhras spent four years in Israeli jails for supporting Palestinian militants. Salah Kadoumi spent 22 years in exile. Now they are masterminding a new project: Palestinian television's first series.

As producer and director of "Fishermen's Nights," they are leading the latest breakthrough in the Palestinians' march from Israeli occupation towards self-determination.

The low-budget series, using mostly props found on local beaches, begins airing in January. Its 39 episodes weave Palestinian history — from Israeli occupation, through rebellion to the current autonomy — into a maze of crime, personal tragedy and unrequited love.

"The fishermen and their problems of poverty under the occupation are a reflection of Palestinian society," said 45-year-old Kadonmi, the mustachioed, energetic director.

"Camera, sound, action," Mr. Kadoumi bellowed through a megaphone across a Gaza beach, ordering his nine actors into place for filming Sunday.

On one, drug-peddling fisherman Abu Sharr stuffs the head of his colleague Jamil into a bucket of water and threatens to slit his throat.

Jamil, suspected of stealing Abu Sharr's supplies, pleads innocence. Abu Sharr, whose name means "father of evil," finally lets the whimpering Jamil go free.

"Cut," shouted Mr. Kadoumi, satisfied with the take.

Although Mr. Kadoumi says drama is at the core of the show, politics is also in the air.

'During the (uprising), the Israelis controlled all this and we could not film on location,' said actor Akram Obeid, 29, who once worked as a house painter in Israel. "There is no doubt that the peace process gives us the full freedom for actors to work."

During the occupation, the Israeli government did not provide funding for Palestinian art, theatre or cinema. The few directors and producers there raised their own money. Palestinian television did not exist.

'Fishermen's Nights' is the first large-scale mini-series to be shown by the Palestinians' only television station, which also airs newscasts, smaller series and a handful of special programmes.

Mr. Akhras, the producer, said he spent four years in Israeli jails for aiding the Fateh Hawks, a militant group once associated with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Mr. Kadoumi spent 22 years in exile, returning in 1994 when Gaza gained autonomy. Like many, he fled the West Bank shortly after Israel seized it in 1967.

Mr. Kadoumi, who earned a communications doctorate in Bulgaria, said that with "Fishermen's Nights," he was aiming for a delicate "European" touch, distinct from the sometimes overwrought local fare.

The show is careful not to offend its target audience. A young woman is covered in traditional dress, and although she has a secret boyfriend, the couple never kiss on screen.

"It would not be appropriate for our audience, for the Arabic culture," explained Mr. Kadoumi. "We don't believe in this kind of love."

Mr. Kadoumi refused to discuss his budget, which is provided by the impoverished Palestinian National Authority, which runs the lone television station.

But he pointed out that the costumes were regular clothing and most of the props, from the fishing boats to an abandoned pier that collapsed two years ago mid-construction, were simply found on the beach.

Mr. Kadoumi conceded the acting still needs work.

"During the past years, these actors and artists were not nurtured or utilised, so they are not the best," he said. "Their work reflects the society in which they live."

6 killed in Algerian violence

PARIS (R) — Six people, including a journalist, have been killed in a bomb explosion and two attacks by gunmen in Algeria, Algerian newspapers said on Tuesday.

Guerrillas shot dead an Algerian journalist working for state-run radio and his brother, a policeman, in the capital Algiers on Monday, French-language newspapers said.

Pro-government armed men on Saturday ambushed guerrillas, killing three rebels near Tigzirt, 40 kilometres east of Algiers, said Liberte on Tuesday.

A bomb ripped through a tax office on Sunday in Baghlia town, 45 kilometres southeast of the Algerian capital, destroying the office and killing one guard, Liberte added.

The explosion was the latest in a rash of bomb attacks in Algiers and other towns since mid-July in which more than 20 people have been killed.

The authorities blamed anti-government guerrillas in the bombings.

In the Monday attack, gunmen opened fire on a car in which journalist Mohammad Guessab and his two brothers were driving in the Algiers suburb of Beau Fraisier, Le Matin and Liberte newspapers reported.

Guessab and his policeman brother were killed and the third man was seriously wounded, they said.

Libyan air force reportedly bombs militants

SALLOUM (AP) — Libyan air force planes are bombing the suspected hideouts of militants in the mountains of eastern Libya, travellers reaching Egypt said Tuesday.

The travellers, mainly Egyptian and Libyan businessmen, said the offensive had been going on for about a week. But a Libyan opposition leader in Cairo said Libyan ground and air forces have been operating in the region for nearly a month, in part under the cover of "live-fire" military manoevures announced by the government.

The businessmen said they believed the campaign marked an intensification of efforts by Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi's government to try to wipe out the radicals, who have been blamed for months of unrest.

All spoke on condition their names not be used for fear of reprisal.

The air action was reported in the green mountain region around the coastal city of Darnah, which is 260 kilometres west of the Libya-Egypt border.

The travellers reaching the Egyptian border town of Sallonm had no reports on casualties. The London-based Arabic weekly Al-Wasat reported earlier this month that clashes between Libyan security forces and Islamic opposition have claimed 600 lives in the past 12 months, according to opposition activists.

They included an estimated 250 dead and 300 wounded among government forces and 350 dead and 480 wounded among the opposition, Al Wasat said.

The Libyan government has made no official announcement of the unrest in eastern Libya and, instead, has talked of a campaign against drug smugglers in the region.

The travellers said government forces have encircled Darnah and allow only people with special permits to leave and enter.

Darnah has been the site of several previous clashes between government troops and militants. In April, the Libyan Al Gamaa Al Islamiya, claimed responsibility for four attacks in which they said they killed five policemen and two soldiers. In March, a series of skirmishes were reported in the region after Muslim militants reportedly engineered a prison break in which some 400 of their colleagues and other government opponents escaped.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
15:05 Iris — The Happy Professor
15:20 .....Flintsones
15:45 .....The New Three Stooges
15:50 .....The Adventures
16:10 .....Kelly
16:30 ..Doc. — The Earth Revealed
17:00 Doc. — La France Aux 1000 Villages
17:30 Varieties — L'Invite De Marque
18:00 ..Doc. — Roule Routier
19:00 .....Le Journal
19:15 ...Magazine — Sport Et Musique
19:30 .....News Headlines
19:35 .....Evening Shade
20:00 ....Super Stars of Actinn
20:30 .....Chancer
21:10 .....Hunter
22:00 .....News in English
22:25 ...The Bold and the Beautiful
23:10 .....Bugs

PRAYER TIMES
04:29.....Fajr
05:54 .....(Sunrise) Duha
12:40 .....Dhuhr
16:20.....'Asr
19:27.....Maghreb
20:25.....'Isha

CHURCHES
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 652526
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Relative hot weather conditions will prevail with temperatures slightly above average and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate to active and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 22/35
Aqaba 27/40
Deserts 20/38
Jordan Valley 26/40
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 35, Aqaba 38 Humidity readings: Amman 46 per cent, Aqaba 38 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
Dr. Hanna Mansour ..750197
Dr. Afif Shukri 898863
Dr. Nidal Al Dahleh ...827195
Dr. Osama Husseini ..847289
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy ...890280
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Al Salam pharmacy ..636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qann 281484
Al Quds pharmacy .....(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Ratib Atallah 994422
Khalifeh pharmacy ...985417

EMERGENCIES
Food Control Centre .637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Reparis 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, ...775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery ..865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified.
Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08(53250).

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ)

Flights
08:00 .....Damascus (RJ)
09:30 .....Jeddah (RJ)
09:55.....Larnaca (RJ)
10:10 ..Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:50 .....Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
15:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:45 Toronto, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:00 .....Paris (RJ)
18:15 .....Istanbul (RJ)
18:50 .....Madrid (RJ)
19:00 ...Brussels, Geneva (RJ)
19:10 ...Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
19:15.....London, Berlin (RJ)
19:30 Montreal, Amsterdam (RJ)
19:40 .....Rome (RJ)
21:40 .....Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
00:30 .....Beirut (RJ)
02:35 .....Cairo (RJ)
04:25 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights
12:00 .....Sanaa (IY)
12:15 .....Jeddah (5V)
13:00 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
13:15 .....Cairo (MS)
13:40...Doha, Abu Dhabi (GF)
14:30 .....Tunis (TU)
15:00 .....Vienna (OS)
16:20.....Algiers (AH)
19:00 .....Dubai (EK)
20:40 .....London, Beirut (BA)
21:10 .....Beirut (ME)
21:40 .....Tel Aviv (LY)
22:35 .....Larnaca (CY)
23:20 .....Amsterdam (KL)
23:30 .....Athens (OA)
03:35 .....Antalia (TK)
06:30 .....Tel Aviv (LY)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
19:45 ..Tel Aviv (QAIA) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:10 .....Madrid (RJ)
11:15 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:30 .....Rome (RJ)
11:40 .....Berlin, London (RJ)
12:10 ..Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:45 .....Istanbul (RJ)
19:30 .....Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
20:10 .....Calcutta (RJ)
20:20.....Colombo (RJ)
20:45 .....Beirut (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Kuala Lumpar (RJ)
21:10 .....Riyadh (RJ)
21:10 ..... Cairo (RJ)
21:20 .....New Delhi (RJ)
22:15 .....Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:50 .....Bangkok (RJ)
23:10 .....Cairo (RJ)
01:00 .....Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights
04:00 .....Amsterdam (KL)
08:45 .....Beirut (ME)
09:15 .....London (BA)
13:00 .....Sanaa ((IY)
13:45 .....Jeddah (SV)
J4:J5 Beirut, Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
14:15 .....Cairo (MS)
14:30 .....Doha, Muscat (GF)
15:30 .....Tunis (TU)
15:50 .....Vienna (OS)
17:20 .....Shariqah (AH)
20:00 .....Dubai (EK)
22:50 .....Tel Aviv (LY)
23:30 .....Larnaca (CY)
00:20 .....Amsterdam (KL)
04:00 .....Athens (OA)
04:35 .....Antalia (TK)
07:25 .....Tel Aviv (LY)

Queen Noor distributes diplomas to aviation college graduates

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Tuesday distributed diplomas to 69 graduates from the Queen Noor Civil Aviation Technical College as well as royal gifts to honour students and long-time staff members, according to a Royal Court statement.

Queen Noor, whose father Najeeb Halaby was the head of the Federal Aviation Administration during the John F. Kennedy administration as well as president of Pan American Airlines, travelled throughout the Middle East before her marriage to research aviation training facilities fnr the preparation of a master plan for an Arab Air University to be established in Jordan.

Her Majesty Queen Noor distributes diplomas to graduates from the Queen Noor Civil Aviation Technical College (Petra photo)

This was a project that was initiated by His Majesty King Hussein to promote pan-Arab cooperation, the statement said.

The Queen expressed her pride in the college, whicb has been cited by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) as one of the best centres nf its kind in the developing world, and said that it bas realised King Hussein's dream for a regional aviation educational institution.

Director-General of Civil Aviation Authnrity Captain Jaser Zayyad ontlined the history of the college, whicb was founded in 1973 as a civil aviation training centre in cooperation with the United Natinns Development Project (UNDP) and ICAO.

The centre was granted the status of an institute in 1978 and was named after Queen Noor in 1980 when sbe became its bonorary president.

Six years later, the Ministry of Higher Education upgraded the institute to a cnllege, granting it licence to teach two-year programmes and to offer diplomas equivalent to those nf a community college.

The Dean of the college, Taysir Taji, said that in 1990 the college became a fnunding member of the international aviation training programme "Trainair", which was established to develop model training prngrammes for civil aviation training centres in developing countries to raise both standard and performance, the statement continued.

He added that the college has developed six model training programmes and is working nn two more which are due to be completed by the end of this year.

The Queen Noor Civil Aviation College offers a specialised training programme for civil aviation employees in addition to its two-year diploma programme.

Its comprebensive educational curriculum includes basic air traffic control, aeronautic cnurses covering telecommunicatinn operations, engineering and meteorolngy.

The college, which has graduated 2,795 students and trainees since its inceptinn, bas enrolled students from the Levant, the Gulf couotries, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Indnnesia, Thailand and Canada.

Queen Noor was accompanied by HRH Prince Faisal Al Hussein, and received by Minister nf Transport Naser Lawzi, Sharif Gbazi Rakan, Chief of the Air Force Mohammad 'Ababneh and Executive Director of Royal Jordanian Nader Dbahabi, the statement said.

Efforts to resolve dispute with opposition deputies fail

By Tareq Momani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Efforts to resolve the conflict that has developed between 24 opposition law makers and the government over the government's decision to lift bread subsidies reached a deadend Tuesday.

Islamic Action Front spokesman Hamzeh Mansour said the opposition group would continue to boycott Parliament's sessions until Jordan Television broadcasts the speeches they made during the special session the Lower House held last week discussing the subsidies issue.

The 24 deputies charge that JTV misrepresented their speeches and have threatened to continue to abort the House meetings by boycotting the sessions and thus denying them a quorum until JTV air their speeches.

The House failed to meet last Wednesday because of the lack of quorm and is scheduled to meet again today, Wednesday.

Lower House Speaker Saad Hayel Srour held a series of meetings Tuesday with representatives of the various parliamentary blocs to secure deputies' attendance of Wednesday's session. At least 54 deputies must be present in order to secure a quorum or the session will be aborted.

Mr. Srour also met with representatives of the 24 opposition deputies and offered to allow the opposition to declare its stand in a televised statement but Mr. Mansour stressed that his group will not attend today's session.

"We adhere to our stand and we are boycotting the sessions until JTV broadcasts last week's speeches and we are demanding that Jordan Television cameras be denied access into the House if our request is not met," Mr. Mansour said

"We have met with Mr. Srour, heard his views and will convey them to our group just before the convening of Wednesday's session," he added.

Other deputies, however, criticised their 24 colleagues, saying their stand can only result in preventing the House from carrying out its duties.

Centrist deputy Mohammad Abu Aleem said: "I am against boycotting (parliamentary) sessions as such actions disrupt Parliament's duties. A deputy can air his views in Parliament but should not boycott sessions as this does not resolve any problem."

"What has been going on between the government and the opposition reflects the true image of democracy but the two sides must be careful to arrive at an acceptable compromise," he said.

A special parliamentary committee formed to secure a compromise between the government and the House over the lifting of subsidies has meanwhile announced that it will pursue efforts to secure a quorum for Wednesday's session up to the last minute.

New prices of wheat, flour announced

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Supply Munir Sobar Tuesday announced the new increased rates of wheat and flour and said that the new rates will take effect immediately.

According to the minister's statement, a tonne of domestic flour will be sold at JD 132.670, while a tonne of wheat will be sold to the mills to produce refined flour at JD 169.690.

A tonne of semolina will sell wbolesale at JD 170, while semolina will sell retail at 300 fils per kilo.

A kilo of domestic flour will sell at the rate of 170 fils per kilo retail, while a kilo of refined flour will be sold for 240 fils, the statement said.

Mr. Sobar Monday set the price for a kilo of domestic bread at 180 fils, and bread made of other than domestic flour at 220 fils.

Prior to the increase, domestic bread sold at 85 fils per kilo and all other kinds at 150 fils.

The Ministry of Supply said Monday that citizens wishing to be compensated for the difference in the price of bread should present their family books to any of the following banks or postal savings funds in order to obtain a cash subsidy:

The Arab Bank, the Islamic Bank, the Cairo-Amman Bank, the National Bank, the Bank of Jordan, the Jordan-Gulf Bank, and the Jordan-Kuwait Bank

The cash subsidy was set by the government at JD 1.28 per person per month. Many of the country's private institutions have already volunteered to compensate their employees and dependents.

The ministry also announced that it will continue providing the public with subsidised milk powder, rice and sugar for which it has been issuing special coupons to limited-income groups since 1991.

On Sunday, the minister announced the new prices of fresh milk and other dairy products, increasing them by 13 to 18 per cent over their former price.

In another announcement Tuesday, Mr. Sobar hiked the price of Marlboro cigarettes up from JD 1.200 to JD 1.250, and the Silk Cut brand from JD 1.000 JD 1 .050

Parliament members have demanded that the government retain the former bread prices by raising funds to cover the budget deficit through an increase in the prices of non-essential commodities like cigarettes and liquor.

KABARITI MEETS WITH BAHRAINI UNDER-SECRETARY
Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti Tuesday reviewed bilateral relations with Bahraini Under secretary of Defence and Chairman nf the Board of Trustees of the Bahraini Centre for Studies and Research Sheikh Salman Ben Hamad Ben Issa Al Khalifa. In a statement to Petra following the meeting, Sheikh Salman said he discussed with Mr. Kabariti issues nf common concern in various fields. Earlier nn Tuesday Sheikh Salman visited the headquarters of the armed forces where he was received by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai Kaabneh, where they discussed military cooperation between the two countries. Sheikh Salman also visited Hussein Medical Centre where he was briefed by Director nf Royal Medical Services Yousef Qoussus nn the role of Royal Medical Services in providing healthcare services to Armed Forces personnel and their families

News In Brief

Services of seven ambassadors extended

AMMAN (Petra) — The cabinet Tuesday lengthened the services of seven ambassadors in the Foreign Ministry beyond the legal retirement age of 60. The ambassadors are: Bassam Qaqish, Hussein Hamami, Abu Nimeh, Ibrahim Naghaway, Fakhri Abu Taleb, Walid Batainch and Saleh Kabariti.

Ports Corporation reduces charges

AQABA (Petra) — The Ports Corporation reduced loading and unloading charges by 20, 42, and 55 per cent on containers, fruit and vegetables, and refrigerated items, respectively, according to corporation director Captain Mohammad Dalabih. Capt. Dalabih said handling charges were also reduced by 25 per cent. In a statement to the Jordanian News Agency, Petra, Capt. Dalabih said the Aqaba airport authorities handled 6.5 million tonnes of goods during the first seven months of this year. He disclosed corporation plans to expand the containers port, the industrial port and the oil port saying that a Japanese team of specialists has just concluded the technical studies for the expansion.

Royal Wings to start Sharm Al Sheikh flights

AMMAN (Petra) — Royal Wings and the Egyptian National Travel Service Monday signed an agreement to a weekly flight between Aqaba and Sharm Al Sheikh airports. The agreement was signed by Royal Wings' Director General Ahed Quntar and signed for the Egyptian National Travel by its own director-general. In a statement to Petra News Agency on Tuesday, Mr Quntar said that Royal Wings is currently involved in talks with several Jordanian travel agents concerning regular flights between Aqaba and Sharm Al Sheikh.

Death of Filipina in Amman raises unanswered questions

By Alia Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The mysterious death of a Filipina domestic helper in Jordan last month bas prompted an outcry in the Philippines with President Fidel Ramos ordering an official inquiry Tuesday as to the circumstances leading to her demise.

Details of the death of 26-year-old Eliza Salem remain sketchy. But a note she left behind, as well as circumstantial evidence, suggest she fell to her death as she was climbing down an electric cable from the third-floor apartment of her employer where she had been locked in for over a week.

The note, a copy of which was made available to the Jordan Times, also suggests that the woman feared physical abuse which, the note implies, she had suffered before.

No immediate explanation was available as to this particular aspect of the incident.

According to Shafiq Jumean, the Philippines Consul in Amman, suspicions relating to this incident are "completely groundless and unjustified." He told the Jordan Times that the investigations are "nearly over" and have proven that Ms. Salem, whose remains arrived in the Philippines August 1, was attempting to run away when she fell to her death.

Describing the investigations as "straightforward," Mr. Jumean dismissed allegations in the Philippines of foul play in the Jordanian authorities' investigations.

Ms. Salem was employed by a Jordanian medical doctor who works in Saudi Arabia and is married to an Egyptian. The childless couple maintained an apartment in Amman for use during their regular visits to the Kingdom.

Ms. Salem was reportedly locked in the Shmeisani apartment for more than a week in July to "clean and prepare" ahead of her employers return to Amman The keys to the apartment were kept with a friend of the employers, who has requested to remain anonymous, and who locked Ms. Salem in, upon their request, so that "valuables are not stolen," he told the Jordan Times,.

He added that there "was plenty of food in the refrigerator" for the domestic helper.

The domestic helper spoke to her employers on July 26, and was told that they would be returning soon, said Mr. Jumean.

According to various sources, the following day Ms. Salem threw her belongings from the window and tried to climb down from the third floor of the apartment building using a cable wire tied to the air-conditioner.

She was found unconscious in the garden by the apartment care taker at about 6.00 a.m. who took her to Shmeisani Hospital. She died five hours later from extreme "haemorrhaging," according to hospital and autopsy reports.

Foreign Secretary of the Philippines, Domingo Siazon, will submit a full report on Ms. Salem's death to President Ramos Thursday.

Her death has received great publicity in the Philippines as another Filipina maid, Sarah Balabagan, was recently granted a reprieve from a death sentence in the United Arab Emirates where she was convicted of killing her employer who attempted to rape her.

The government of the Philippines is strengthening laws to protect the four million Filipinos working abroad.

Teachers complete seminars for new academic year

AMMAN (J. T.) — In preparation for the upcoming 1996-97 scholastic year the Ministry of Education instituted seminars for school principals as well as summer ones for teachers to familiarise them with the new secondary level curricula .

Teachers are to return to school on Aug 19 to complete necessary preparations for the scholastic year.

Classes are scheduled to begin Aug 24.

Teachers, returning form their secondment to other Arab countries, have been appointed to new posts according to a Ministry of Education statement issued Tuesday.

The ministry transferred 1500 teachers to centres in various governorates and employed an additonal 3000 teachers, the statement further noted

An expected 1.35 million students are to start the new academic year.

Meanwhile the ministry received all necessary textbooks for each school grade and duly dispersed them to the education departments in the governorates for subsequent student distribution.

WHAT'S GOING ON

PLAY

* "Medea" (Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

FILM

* "A Fish Called Wanda" at the British Council at 7:00 p.m.

LECTURES

* "Results of the 1996 Season at the Southern Temple of Petra" by Professor Martha Joukowsky at the American Center of Oriental Research, University Road at 7:00 p.m. (Tel: 846-117)

POETRY

* Recital of poems at the Royal Cultural Centre, conference hall, at 7:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Wrought-iron exhibition by Salim Bandak at Kan Zaman until Aug. 21.
* Abstract (plastic) art by Hani Barto entitled "Between Past and Present" at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Aug. 29.
* "Science for Health" exhibition at the British Council until Aug. 17.
* Abstract (plastic) art by Hussein Da'seh and Nader Sammara on Jerusalem at the Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Uthaina, (Tel: 826932), until Aug. 20
* Graphic works by Eman Odeh at the Phoenix Art Gallery (Tel: 695291), until Aug. 15
* Photo exhibition by Hani Houram entitled "People and Places" at Baladna Art Gallery (Tel: 687596), until Aug. 15.

Islamic group condemns Russian 'aggression'

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Council of Islamic Organisations and Societies (CIOSJ) Tnesday urged Russian Federatioo President Boris Yeltsin to stop the war in Chechenya and to withdraw Russian forces from the repnblic, according to a CIOSJ statement.

"The Chechen people, as all other nations in the former Soviet Union, is seeking independence from Russia but Moscow is adamantly insisting upon controlling this nation by force and against the will of the Chechens who yearn for independence and freedom" said the CIOSJ in a letter sent to Mr. Yeltsin through the Russian embassy in Jordan.

The letter, which lauded what it called the heroism of the Chechen people, said that the war against the Chechens was wounding the sentiments of more than 1,200 million Muslims worldwide.

"Muslims feel great pain over the suffering of their brothers and sisters and strongly condemn the Rnssian aggression (against Chechenya)," said the CIOSJ.

The letter, which was signed by the CIOSJ Secretary-General Abdul Latif Subeihi, called on Mr. Yeltsin to end the fighting, give the Chechens their freedom and "establish good relations with them based on mutual respect." "Only when you have done that will you find Islamic nations once again on your side, supporting your endeavours against oppression and colonialism," the letter said.

The Jordanian Committee for Solidarity with the Chechen People also condemned what it called the blatant Russian aggressinn against the Chechen people and demanded an immediate balt to the conflict.

In a statement issued Tuesday, the committee accused Mr. Yeltsin of reneging on promises he had made to the Chechen people, adding that Russian forces were killing civilians indiscriminately, destroying their bomes and displacing bundreds of thousands of innocent Chechens.

The cnmmittee urged the international community and world organisations to pressure Russia tn stop the war in Chechenya.

Russian forces struggle to retake Grozny; refugees flee

GROZNY, Russia (R) — Mortar shells crashed over the Chechen capital Grozny Tuesday as Russian troops struggled to claw their way back into the city, its key buildiogs held by rebel fighters for the last eight days.

Refugees ran a gauntlet of bullets and shells to escape the fighting in the centre of town.

"Please tell them to opeo a corridor," pleaded Ruisa Sukhanova, as she fled across a railway bridge in the Grozny suburb of Chernorechye. "There are thousands of people trapped back there."

Representatives of Chechenya's pro-Moscow authorities accused the Russian army nf firing on civilians and preventing thousands of refugees from leaving Grozny, home to 400,000 people before Russia sent soldiers to crush the region's independence in 1994.

More than 30,000 people have died since then and hundreds are thought to have been killed in the latest attacks.

"Tens nf thousands of people are trapped on the outskirts of Grozny without food supplies and with a catastrophic lack of medicine," said a statemeot by a Chechen mission in Moscow.

The fighting, which started last week with a Chechen raid on Grozny timed to coincide with President Boris Yeltsin's inauguration, is the heaviest for more than a year in the separatist Caucasus region.

Russia's military command told RIA news agency that 221 soldiers had beeo killed and 766 wounded in the clashes.

Russian soldiers tried to fight back Tuesday in what ITAR-TASS news agency described as a "special operation to expel and destroy fighters in Grozoy."

But local resident Alkha Tasuyev reported no sign of Russian troops in the centre of town, except for those at checkpoints, which were surrounded by rebel fighters.

Helicopters clattered overhead and snipers were active from ruined buildings around town.

"There are no Russian soldiers in the centre," he said. "They are at their bases at Khankala and Severny and are surrounded at checkpoints by rebels."

The rebels tried to attack Khankala Monday but were beaten back, Interfax quoted a Chechen spokesman as saying that the attack was designed only to "probe the Russian defeoces."

The latest fighting started on Aug. 6 when rebel fighters captured key buildings in Grozny and surrounded already demoralised Russian soldiers at their checkpoints.

Russian security chief Alexander Lebed, horrified at the condition of Russian troops in the region, said Monday that Moscow and the rebels were trying to work out a ceasefire.

Russian news agencies said Chechenya's deputy chief of staff and a senior Russian military representative were meeting Tuesday for preliminary talks.

Movladi Udugov, Checheoya's information chief, said separatist units controlled 75 to 80 per ceot of Grozny and two other towns, Gudermes and Argun, were in rebel bands.

The latest fighting has forced the Kremlin to rethink its policy in Chechenya, which declared itself indepeodeot in 1991.

Gen. Lebed, Mr. Yeltsin's new representative in Chechenya, told a news conferecce Monday he expected Mr. Yeltsin to give him new powers to end the war and wanted a broad congress of regional figures.

He also believed the mostly Muslim rebels migbt agree to a degree of autonomy short of secession.

Meanwhile, the European Commission said Tuesday it bad approved a further aid package worth 4.18 millioo ECUs ($5.3 million) for civilian casualties in Chechenya.

The aid, which will be channelled through the European Community (EU) Humanitarian Office (ECHO), brings total EU assistance to 35 million ECUs ($44.5 million) since Russia sent troops in 1994 to crush the reginn's independence.

"The situation is still very difficult for aid agencies," a commission spokesman said, adding that humanitarian aid workers found access to the Chechen capital Grozny extremely dangerous.

Experts estimate that over 100,000 people in Chechenya need food and up to half the population of ahout 1.2 million requires medical aid.

Outside Chechenya, aid workers estimate there are over 112,000 refugees and EU aid will be targetted on the most vulnerable, located in Ingushetia and Daghestan.

The EU aid will eoable the World Food Programme, the United Natioos High Commissioner for Refugees and private Belgian, Frencb and Italian aid agencies to carry out a coordinated aid programme until the end of the year.

In a statement Sunday, the EU expressed serious concern at the escalation in fighting in Checheoya, especially the civilian casualties, and appealed to both the Russian army and separatist rebels to cease fire immediately.

Russian security supremo Alexander Lebed shows a document during a news conference in Moscow. Gen. Lebed said Monday he and rebel Chief of Staff Aslan Maskhadov had agreed to try to work out a ceasefire deal to end seven days of fighting in the Chechen capital Grozny (Reuter photo)

Retired army Colonel Shahriar Rashid Khan (centre) is seen in a police car after he was arrested Tuesday. Col. Shahriar is alleged to be a mastermind of the Aug. 15, 1975, army conp which killed Bangladesh's independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, father of current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Police say they also arrested two nther ex-officers, Colnnel Farook Reehman and Major Mohammad Khairuzzaman, Tuesday as part of investigation into Mujib's killing (Reuter photo)

Bangladesh arrests 3 over 1975 murder of independence leader

DHAKA (R) — Pnlice arrested three former Bangladesh army officers Tuesday in connection with the 1975 assassination of independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, police said.

Retired army Colonel Farook Reebman, ex-Colonel Shahriar Rashid Khan and retired Major Mohammad Khairuzzaman were arrested early Tuesday and will face trial for murder and rebelling against a legally-installed government, police said.

Mujib, who led Bangladesh to independence from Pakistan in 1971, was killed in a 1975 military coup, allegedly masterminded by Col. Farook, Col. Shahriar and their comrades.

The arrests follow June national elections, which saw Mujib's daughter and chief of the Awami League, Sheikh Hasina, return to power after her party had speot 21 years in opposition.

The three were arrested under the oation's Special Powers Act which allows any suspect to be detained for one month without being formally charged, police officials said.

"The swoop will continue," one police official told Reuters.

Maj. Khairuzzaman was Bangladesh's charge d'affaires in the Philippines before being recalled to Dhaka in July when the government sacked six ex-army officers allegedly involved in the 1975 coup.

The officers, including Maj. Khairuzzaman, had all taken up diplomatic assignments.

The penalty could be "anything up to death," one police official said without giving details.

The arrests were made only two days before Bangladesh planned the first official mourning for Mujib.

Burundi imposes fuel rationing

BUJUMBURA (R) — Burundi's military-appointed government, feeling the pressure of African sanctions, imposed stringent petrol rationing Tuesday as anxious foreigners and Burundians packed for the last commerical flights out.

Petrol in the landlocked couotry was limited from Tuesday to 20 litres (four gallons) per mooth for cars, 40 (8.8 gallons) for taxis, 200 (44 gallons) for buses and 400 (88 gallons) for trucks.

Officials distributed ration cards but the general mood on the streets of the lakeside capital Bujumbura was calm with only a few petrol stations already closed because of shortages.

State-run radio said rationing was oecessary to save stocks while efforts were made to reverse the economic blockade by neighbouring states angered by a Tutsi military coup on July 25.

The radio called for sacrifice "to fight this war against our nation" since retired army Major Pierre Buyoya took power.

"Sanctions will not discourage us. To the contrary they will only strengthen our solidarity," the radio added defiantly.

A lack of solidarity however was evident among many of the more than 400 Burundians and foreigners packing for the last two commercial flights out of the sanctions-hit country Tuesday.

Sabeoa officials in the lakeside capital Bujumbura said both the Belgian airline's DC-10 planes were booked solid for flights to Brussels but people were still queuing up in hopes of getting seats only bours before they were due to arrive in Bujumbura.

The rush for fickets on the two planes, which together can take more than 400 people, was increased by people transferring tickets from a Saturday Air France flight which was cancelled.

The Belgian Foreigo Ministry told its embassy in Bujumbura to encourage all Belgians still in Buruodi to catch the flights.

France urged 170 French nationals whose presence was held as noo-essential also to leave despite Paris not supporting the regional embargo, which it says will only hurt ordinary people.

The U.S. embassy has called on all Americans to leave the country and the U.N. wants to pull out non-essential staff.

Sources close to ousted Hutu President Sylvestre Ntibannunganya, holed up at the U.S. Ambassador's residence since shortly before the army coup, said his wife Paskazi Minani Ntibantunganya would leave on one of the two Sabena flights.

They said she would travel on to Switzerland from Brussels on what they described as a previously arranged trip abroad.

Burundi has been cut off from its surrounding nations since Friday under sanctions to force a return to civilian rule amid fears of genocide on a scale similar to that in Rwanda in 1994.

More than 150,000 people have been killed in Burundi in three years of massacres and war betweeo miooritly Tutsis and ethnic Hutus, who make up 85 per cent of its 5.6 million people.

But seveo U.N. World food Programme (WFP) trucks loaded with 210 tonnes of beans left Isaka, Tanzania, for Burundi's border Tuesday after Tanzania agreed to allow humanitarian aid to reach Burundi.

The trucks were escorted by a Tanzaoian customs official and would cross Wednesday into Burundi, where they would be escorted by troops to the troubled northern province of Ngozi.

An estimated 300,000 people in Burundi depend on WFP food.

Some 2,000 tonnes of aid for refugees and displaced people in Burundi and Zaire were blocked at Tanzania's port of Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika with 3,000 tonnes in Dar Es Salaam and Isaka.

WFP officials said the agency had more than a month of food supplies stockpiled in Burundi but fuel shortages were critical.

Officials said Burundi's national soccer squad at the last minute cancelled plans to leave for Brussels Tuesday en route to the Central African Republic for an African Nation's Cup match postponed last weekend because of its failure to arrive.

They said the team would not travel as it had been unable to obtain transit visas for the players to overnight in Paris.

School children narrowly avoid Soweto plane crash; 2 injured

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Dozens of school children had a narrow escape Tuesday when a light aircraft crashed ioto a soccer field in the sprawling Soweto township, injuring the pilot and a passenger, police and witnesses said.

Police spokesman Govindsamy Mariemuthoo said the plane, a Cessna 172B, experienced engine problems and was forced to crash land on the dusty sports field near Veritas High School in Diepkloof, a middle-income section of the township outside Johannesburg.

The pilot, Riaan Basson, and a single passenger, Alex De Klerk were taken to a local clinic, and pronounced in satisfactory condition, Mr. Mariemuthoo added.

Winnie Mpitsi, a local resident who witnessed the crash said she saw the plane plunge erratically from the sky, then scrape across the field as children were playing soccer.

"All the kids who were playing football ran away when it hit the ground," Ms. Mpitsi said.

The plane, which had its nose and engine extensively damaged by the crash, was hired to Coin Security, an armoured money transport firm, to do surveillance for money transport vehicles travelling through the township.

An employee of the company said Mr. Basson had not worked for the company for long, although the company used planes on a regular basis.

Following the crash, which also took place close to a marketplace, schoolchildren and shoppers excitedly gathered around police and civil aviation officials who were investigating the incident.

Polish zoo seeks home for happy hippos

WARSAW (R) — Warsaw Zoo has two hippos too many and is so desperate to find them a good home that it is appealing in the press for a truly exceptional animal lover. "To adopt a hippopotamus, call 619 7775," Gazeta Wyborcza daily's Warsaw section advertised on the zoo's behalf Monday. The animals' father will no longer allow the two, aged one and three years, to stay in their cramped city-centre pood but other zoos are reluctant to house male hippopotami. Ideally, the zoo would like some donor to help enlarge its own hippo enclosure, but barring that it hopes to find someone willing to spend up to $250 a month to maintain a hippo throughout its 40 years of life. The hippos need a large pool and the water needs regular changing and heating during Poland's icy winter. "They are very pleasant and mild, and they won't do anynne any harm if they are well-trained," said Ewa Zbonikowska, head of the zoo's education department.

Murderer's muesli court victory costs prison a packet

LONDON (R) — Britain's Prison Service faced a bill for an estimated £2,000 ($3,100) after a convicted murderer took it to court over a packet of muesli. Noel Brown sued over his prison shop's refusal to honour a 25 pence (38 cents) money-back offer oo the product. Mr. Brown, 28, who is serving a life sentence, at Littlehey Prison in Cambridgeshire, eastern England, won the case and was awarded the 25 pence in compensation. But the prison, which had argued that honouring special offer vouchers would involve too much administration, was ordered to pay legal costs, about £1,000 for each side. The court decision will not change shop policy.

Falklands War veteran found in asylum

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (R) — An Argentine sailor missing and presumed dead after his ship was sunk by a British submarine in the Falklands War in 1982, has turned up in a mental asylum 14 years later, his family said Monday. Oscar Montegrosso, now 34, was found by his mother in the Montes De Oca Asylum near Buenos Aires, where he was listed as "NN" — No Name. Elvira Montegrosso had kept up the search for her son and had heard that he might be at the asylum. Television pictures showed him sitting in the sun with other inmates, apparently unaware of all the fuss. Mr. Montegrosso's family in his home town in Santa Fe province said he disappeared in the sinking of the cruiser Gen. Belgrano when it was outside disputed waters and heading for home. Hospital director Dr. Alberto De Souches said Mr. Montegrosso had beeo there for 2-1/2 years, never spoke and was being treated as a "serious mental retard" — possibly due to post-traumatic stress disorder, or from injuries during the attack oo his ship.

Guzzling zoo animals star in Guinness auction

NEW YORK (R) — Christie's East Monday started displaying a large personal collection of advertising related to Irish brewer Guinoess, ranging from 60-year-old posters to ceramic, boozy zoo animals, to be auctioned next month. Briton Ian Livingston recently decided that the collection of several hundred items had overtaken his life, said Christie's spokeswoman Jill Potterton. Mr. Livingston, a games inventor, will keep only one item: A Guinness lamp that started his collection passion 20 years ago.

Phnom Penh concedes defections may be smaller

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — The Cambodian governmeot Tuesday cooceded that the number of Khmer Rouge guerrillas to have split from the hardline central leadership over the past week might be less than announced.

Meanwhile at their headquarters near the Thai border, the renegade faction ordered the arrest of two hardline members of the central guerrilla leadership and appealed for Thailand's help in doing so.

In Phnom Penh, Co-Defence Minister Tea Banh told reporters that not all the Khmer Rouge in the northwest had decided to join their commanders in breaking with the hardliners and allying themselves with the group's former number two Ieng Sary, whom the leadership has denounced as a "traitor."

"The number of troops is unclear because they bave to hide their (strength)," Mr. Tea Banh said during a break in a National Assembly session. "I can't say what percentage of the men have actually cut themselves from the hardliners."

Over the weekend, Co-Premier Hun Sen and the commander of renegade Division 450, Sok Pheap, claimed that some 4,000 guerrillas, or 70 per cent of the rebels' estimated force in the northwest, had broken away.

Military analysts and diplomats have been skeptical of that figure and have urged caution in describing the number of actual renegades as no one has yet seen the defectors.

In another indication that the mass defection might not be as large as was announced, the Cambodia daily newspaper reported that a military aircraft flew over the rebel base of Pailin Monday dropping leaflets urging remaining "loyalists" to join with the new faction.

Pailin is the home base of Division 415 which was said to have joined the oew faction.

Officials in Phnom Penh had said during the weekend that both Pailin and Phnom Malai, Sok Pheap's headquarters, were no longer rebel bases.

Sok Pheap has denied that he and his men defected to the government but has acknowleged a rift in the movement and said he would no longer follow the orders of the hardline leadership. He has now also ordered the arrest of two main hardline leaders.

"The commanders of Divisions 450, 415 and 250 appeal to foreign countries and friends who love peace to help close completely the checkpoints behind the backs of the traitors Son Sen and Ta Mok in order to allow (us) to arrest them for their cruel acts," his group said.

"This appeal is made to avoid bloodshed between Khmer and Khmer and an attempt to prevent the killers from having a chance to intimidate the weak people," said a statemeot, dated Monday, which was faxed to news organisations in Phnom Penh Tuesday.

Mr. Son Sen, the Khmer Rouge minister of defence and Mr. Ta Mok, the chief of staff of the guerrillas' National Army of Democratic Kampuchea, are believed to be in northwest Cambodia near the Thai border.

Despite Mr. Sok Pheap's claim not to have defected, the government has insisted the renegades have and residents in Poipet, the Cambodian town on the Thai border closest to Phnom Malai, said Tuesday at least 10 senior Khmer Rouge men were staying in a hotel there under government protection.

H. Kong Democrats urged to join China committee

HONG KONG (R) — Beijing's propaganda ma-chine in Hoog Kong swung ioto action Tuesday attacking the populist Democratic Party's decision not to join the team that will pick the territory's first leader after its 1997 handover to China.

One Beijiog-backed oewspaper slammed the leaders of the pro-democracy party as agents of British imperialism, while another urged party leader Martin Lee to reconsider China's olive branch.

"If Lee truly wants to serve Hong Kong's public, he has only one choice — that's to stop being confrontational and allowing his members who can qualify to join the selection committee," a column in the Ta Kung Pao said.

Beijing at the weekend issued a veiled invitation to the Democrats, until now excluded by China from all handover arrangements, to join the Selection Committee that will choose Hong Kong's first post-handover leaders.

The British colony reverts to China at midnight on June 30 next year.

The Democrats rejected the suggestion because the committee, besides choosing the first chief executive, will also appoint a legislature to replace the current fully-elected council.

But the party sought to prevent China slamming the door shut, saying it would seek a dialogue with Beijing.

Columns in the two major China-backed newspapers in the colony urged the Democrats to be realistic.

The Ta Kung Pao argued that if the Democrats stayed outside the political establishment of the special administrative region — Hong Kong's status after China resumes sovereignty — they would lose support because they could oot represent voters.

The Beijing-funded Wen Wei Po accused them of being agents of British imperialists.

"Some Democrats, who oppose the provisional legislature, in fact are not defenders of democracy," it said.

"They are only interested in helping Britain's attempt to extend its colonial influence after the handover," it said. "They are in fact defenders of a British colonial dictatorship."

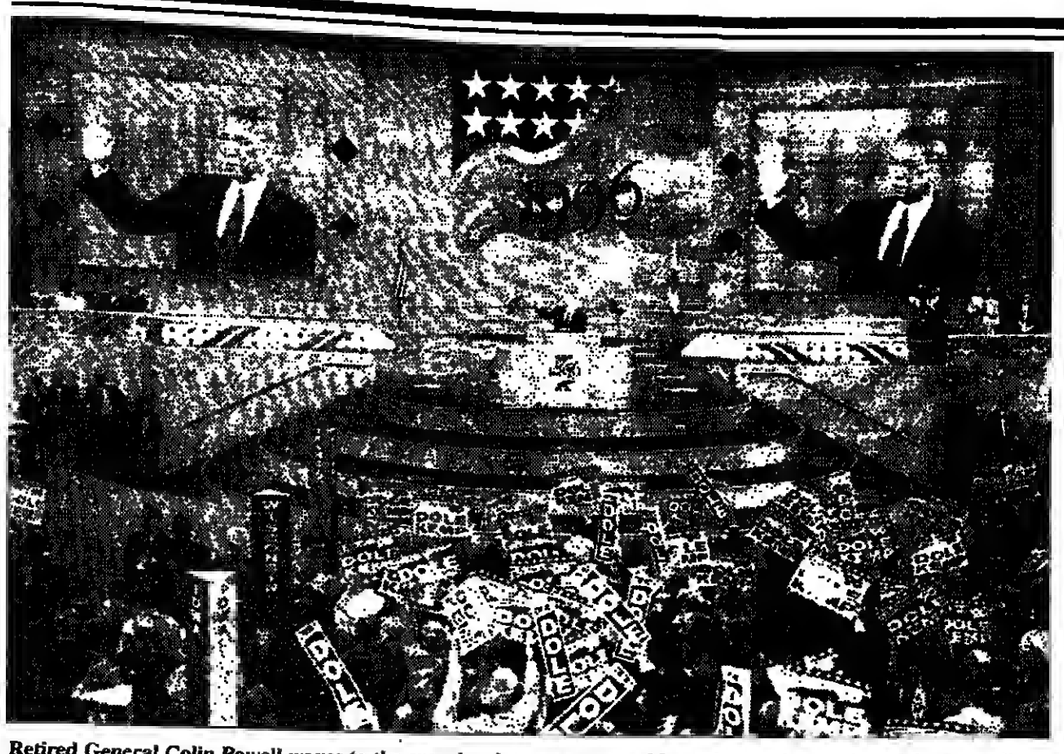
The 400-strong Selection Committee will be established in October by China's influential Preparatory Committee — an organisation from which the Democratic Party has been excluded.

It was to name just the first chief executive, but after China rejected electoral reforms put in place by the colonial administration, the committee was charged with appointing a provisional legislature to supplant the current elected chamber.

The Democratic Party, which fared best in last September's Legislative Council elections, adamantly opposes seeing the chamber dissolved and replaced with an appointed body.

Despite the controversy over the provisional legislature, professional groups in Hong Kong are beginning to nominate representatives to the team of 400.

The Hong Kong Medical Association said it had oominated 18 members, the Hong Kong Institution of Eogineers proposed 70 members and the pro-China Federation of Education Workers has nominated 30 members.



Retired General Colin Powell waves to the crowd as he prepares to address the evening session of the Republican National Convention Monday. Gen. Powell's speech concluded the first day of the four-day convention (Reuter photo)

U.S. Republican Party gets boost from Powell

SAN DIEGO (R) — Republicans basked Tuesday in the glow of the man many wanted to run for president, retired General Colin Powell, as their slickly packaged convention unleashed a drumbeat attack on President Bill Clinton.

"It was a great night. We got off to a good start," presidential candidate Bob Dole said happily after the first convention session promoted an image for voters of a party with open arms promising new and visionary leadership for America.

The second day Tuesday features a keynote address by Congresswoman Susan Molinari of New York and an appearance by House Speaker Newt Gingrich, leader of a "Republican revolution" that seized both houses of Congress from the Democrats two years ago.

But it was new Republican recruit Gen. Powell, speaking far longer than others at the convention, who brought cheering delegates to their feet as he recounted his roots in a black immigrant family and his rise to commander of U.S. military forces.

"I come before you this evening as a retired soldier, a fellow citizen who has lived the American dream to the fullest. As someone who believes in that dream and wants that dream to become reality for every American," said Gen. Powell.

"At the same time let us never step back from compassion," he lectured the nearly 2,000 delegates, who are overwhelmingly white and perhaps more conservative than many in their party.

"The message that we must convey to the American people is that we fight for welfare reform. We fight for health care reform and other reforms not just to save money, but because we believe there are better ways to take care of Americans in need than the exhausted programmes of the past."

Former first lady Nancy Reagan addresses an evening session of the Republican National Convention after a video tribute to her husband, former President Ronald Reagan was shown Monday at the San Diego Convention Centre (Reuter pboto)

There were scattered boos when Gen. Powell mentioned his support for a woman's right to an abortion and for affirmative action programmes to help minorities.

Earlier, the convention passed a platform opposed to abortion, and a Los Angeles Times poll indicated that 65 per cent of the delegates were against affirmative action.

Sen. Dole watched Gen. Powell's speech on television and applauded when the retired general addressed the gathering as "my fellow Republicans."

"That's what they want to hear," he said

Leaving the convention hall Mr. Gingrich shook Gen. Powell's hand, congratulating him on his rousing speech.

Delegates were delighted with the speech. "I don't agree with him on two points, but so what. We can disagree and still be in the same family," said James Meola of Worcester, Massachusetts.

"He's going to be the first black president and I am glad he is a Republican," said one North Dakota woman delegate.

The convention's first day also saw a tear-wrenching tribute to former President Ronald Reagan by his wife Nancy.

Mr. Reagan, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease, was not present.

The first session saw the start of what is sure to be a steady attack on Mr. Clinton during the four-day convention.

Former President Gerald Ford took a side swipe at both the legal troubles that have hit some of Mr. Clinton's business associates and his lack of military service by saying the country needed "a leader of principled, proven integrity ... a commander-in-chief who has earned his salutes, a president who would rather tackle tough problems than talk."

Some of the toughest criticism came from former President George Bush, the man Mr. Clinton defeated four years ago, who said, "it breaks my heart when the White House is demeaned, the presidency itself diminished.

"Bob Dole as president will treat the White House with respect, his staff will be beyond even the appearance of impropriety and in the process he will increase respect for the United States of America across the world," he said.

Delegates were keeping a wary eye on the polls.

A USA Today/CNN survey said Sen. Dole had cut the huge gap with Mr. Clinton and was now only nine points behind the president, thanks largely to his selection of former congressman and football star Jack Kemp as his running mate.

But an ABC Television tracking poll released Monday evening still had Sen. Dole 19 points behind Mr. Clinton — a gap that no challenger has overcome in modern times.

The survey measured no noticeable benefit for Sen. Dole since he named Mr. Kemp to the ticket Saturday.

S. Korea orders clemency for ex-associates of Roh

SEOUL (R) — South Korea, which is preparing to commemorate the 51st anniversary of liberation from Japanese rule, said Tuesday it would restore the civil rights of several former aides to disgraced ex-President Roh Tae-Woo.

A Justice Ministry spokesman said the government would also free 586 prisoners Thursday, marking the end of Japan's harsh 1910-45 colonial rule over the Korean peninsula.

Among those benefiting from the clemency was Kim Chong-Hwi, Mr. Roh's former chief secretary for security and foreign affairs.

Mr. Kim was sentenced to a suspended jail term of three years earlier this year for accepting 230 million won ($282,000) in bribes linked to state arms procurements.

Another prominent figure included in the clemency order was Rhee Yong-Man, who was convicted this year of taking bribes from a commercial bank while serving as finance minister during Mr. Roh's rule.

Mr. Rhee escaped imprisonment in May when an appeals court suspended his 2-1/2 year jail sentence.

The civil rights of former Trade Minister Ahn Byong-Hwa will also be reinstated. Mr. Ahn, a former president of the state-run Korea Electric Power Corp, was sentenced to three years in jail in 1994 on corruption charges. He was released in a special Liberation Day pardon a year ago.

Without the official clemency, those freed before completing their prison terms or released with suspended sentences are barred from voting or running for public office.

But the order by the government of President Kim Young-Sam, a vociferous anti-graft crusader since his inauguration in February 1993, drew criticism from opposition quarters.

"All of those included in this clemency and restoration of civil rights are masterminds of massive corruption," the main opposition National Congress for New Politics said in a statement.

By granting clemency to those power-hungry criminals, the government proves that its anti-graft drive is simply a political show, not aimed at real reform."

A spokesman for the United Liberal Democrats Party also denounced the move, saying South Korea "has become a country with no social justice and true spirit of law."

Mr. Roh, detained last November on charges of accepting hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes during his 1988-93 term, now awaits sentencing.

Last week state prosecutors demanded a life sentence for Mr. Roh, who has also been charged with mutiny and treason stemming from a 1979 military coup and an army massacre the following year of pro-democracy protesters in the city of Kwangju.

They seek the death penalty for Mr. Roh's predecessor, Chun Doo Hwan, on charges of masterminding the coup and the massacre.

Street violence flares anew in Seoul

SEOUL (AFP) — Fresh clashes broke out here Tuesday as students tried to march to the truce village of Panmunjom in an attempt to welcome North Korean counterparts for an outlawed pro-unification rally here, witnesses said.

At least seven riot policemen were injured when some 600 radicals battled with police near a subway station on the unification road leading to Panmunjom in the demilitarized zone dividing the Koreas.

South Korea forbids such contact and roads to Panmunjom were under heavy security Tuesday.

Two South Korean students who defied threats of arrest and flew last week to North Korea were to have returned home via Panmunjom along with North Koreans for the rally, but their homecoming was postponed until Wednesday.

The marchers, mostly from the southwestern city of Kwangju, wielded metal pipes and hurled rocks and firebombs, shattering the windows of 15 police vehicles. Police fired volleys of teargas and brandished clubs.

Clashes also erupted in at least three places outside Yonsei University in western Seoul and outside Dong-Guk University in central Seoul, causing traffic snarls.

Four other universities, including Seoul National University, reported rallies by students numbering between 500 and 1,000 each, who later converged on the Yonsei University by breaking through police lines.

An estimated 10,000 leftist students assembled on the Yonsei Univesity campus for the annual pro-unification rallies and conferences marking the 51st anniversary of liberation from Japanese colonial rule Thursday.

On Monday, scores of people were also injured in clashes between the students and riot police.

The violence came after riot police, armed with teargas launchers, shields and clubs, sealed off the university to prevent leftist students from holding the rallies, outlawed as pro-Pyongyang by Seoul.

Press reports said that 18,000 riot police troops have been deployed here, including 6,000 around Yonsei University.

Students later said two South Korean students who flew to Pyongyang last week in defiance of their own government would return a day late Wednesday because of the police obstruction.

Sri Lankan battle drags on; Tigers deny bombing temple

COLOMBO (AFP) — Long-range fighting raged in northern Sri Lanka Tuesday between government forces and Tamil Tiger guerrillas as the rebels denied bombing a Hindu temple in the eastern town of Batticaloa, officials said.

Security forces fired mortar bombs and artillery against positions of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as sporadic fighting killed five people throughout the island's embattled northeast, the military said.

The LTTE offered stiff resistance to the military advance against their political headquarters at the town of Kilinochchi and one soldier died in an overnight Tiger mortar attack, officials said.

Defence sources confirmed that ferocious counter-attacks by the Tigers had bogged down government soldiers despite the use of artillery guns and close air support from helicopter gunships and Kfir supersonic jets.

The Tigers had said that aerial bombardments had reduced Kilinochchi to rubble with virtually every concrete structure damaged. Some 200,000 civilians in the area have fled further southwards.

Official figures show that 51 soldiers were killed and 70 wounded in the battle for Kilinochchi. The military estimates that more than 300 rebels were killed. However, the Tigers said they lost only 51 fighters killed.

Civil administrators in the region have said that at least 25 civilians were killed and more than 100 wounded in the fighting.

Some 200,000 people have also been made homeless.

A government spokesman said the LTTE was holding up trucks in areas under their control and preventing the transport of essential food and medicine to the refugees.

"They are creating food shortages by not allowing lorries to come over to (the government-held town of) Vavuniya to take the food stocks," a government spokesman said. "Tigers are using food as a weapon."

In a statement from their London office, the LTTE Tuesday denied that they carried out a bomb attack against a Hindu temple in the eastern coastal town of Batticaloa Sunday, wounding 34 devotees and four policemen.

"This is a heinous act by the Sri Lankan security forces to terrorise the people," the LTTE statement said.

The military blamed the LTTE for the bomb attack, which came during a festival at the Hindu temple.

"The Tigers are trying to destabilise the area and that is why they resort to this type of attack to create a feeling of insecurity among the people," a military spokesman here said.

Troops established control over the eastern region four years ago, confining the rebels to the northern province. However, with the fall of the guerrillas' northern citadel of Jaffna, the militants have stepped up attacks in the east.

More than 50,000 people have been killed in fighting in the LTTE's protracted campaign for a separate state over the past 23 years.

Taiwan plays down leader's U.S. stopover

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan Tuesday played down Vice President Lien Chan's transit stay in the United States, which has riled Beijing, and reaffirmed that there would be no public activities for Mr. Lien in New York.

"This is a simple transit in New York. Vice President Lien will take a rest in New York to adjust to time differences," Taiwan government spokesman Su Chi said in New York. Mr. Su's comments were broadcast on state-funded radio in Taipei.

Mr. Lien is scheduled to leave New York Wednesday to attend the presidential inauguration of Leonel Fernandez in the Dominican Republic, one of only 31 countries that recognise Taiwan instead of China.

"We have a very very simple schedule in New York. It is purely personal," Mr. Su said on the radio.

China has opposed the stopover, urging Washington "to honour the solemn commitment it has made on the question of Taiwan so as to prevent new damages from occurring in Sino-U.S. relations."

Mr. Lien, who doubles as Taiwan's premier after he was elected vice president in March, was greeted by James Wood, chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan, in Newark, New Jersey, a short drive from New York City, the radio said.

Indonesian activists to be charged with subversion

JAKARTA (R) — The Indonesian military said Tuesday some of the 10 activists arrested this week over last month's riots in Jakarta would be charged with subversion.

Budiman Sudjatmiko, head of the People's Democratic Party (PRD), and nine other activists from the group, which has been blamed for the July 27 riots, were taken into custody Sunday and early Monday.

President Suharto has accused the PRD of attempting to topple the government under the guise of a pro-democracy movement.

"We are going to await developments in the investigation, but of course there would be some of them who will be charged with subversion," military spokesman Brigadier-General Amir Syariffudin told Reuters.

Subversion carries the death penalty in Indonesia.

Gen. Syariffudin gave no other details and did not say where the activists were being detained.

The government has already charged an independent labour leader with subversion in the wake of the riots, the worst violence in the city for more than two decades.

Munir, a spokesman for the Legal Aid Institute, told Reuters most of the PRD activists would be charged with subversion. He said the summons issued by the police to some people appearing as witnesses stated Mr. Sudjatmiko and his colleagues were involved in subversive action.

Authorities have questioned several opposition leaders, including the ousted leader of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) Megawati Sukarnoputri, as part of investigations into the riots.

The riots erupted after police stormed the PDI headquarters and evicted Ms. Megawati supporters, who had barricaded themselves inside to prevent the takeover of the building by a government-backed party faction.

The government has said the PRD infiltrated supporters of MS. Megawati, daughter of Indonesia's late founding President Sukarno.

Meanwhile newspapers reported Tuesday that President Suharto's son-in-law, Brigadier-General Prabowo Subianto, has been promoted to major-general, the youngest officer in the Indonesian military to attain the rank.

Military spokesmen were not available for confirmation.

Gen. Prabowo, 45, who heads the elite Special Forces (Kopassus) section of the military, will continue in that post, but the division has been enlarged, newspapers said.

"The decree on Gen. Prabowo's promotion has been signed and he will officially become the permanent chief of Kopassus," army chief General Hartono was quoted as saying by the Jakarta Post.

Merdeka newspaper said Gen. Prabowo would soon report to armed forces chief General Feisal Tanjung to formally take up the appointment.

Gen. Prabowo is married to Suharto's second daughter Siti Hediati Hariadi. Mr. Suharto, a former army general, has ruled Indonesia with an iron grip since the mid-1960s.

Gen. Prabowo is credited with successfully leading a Kopassus operation in May to release a group of Indonesians and Europeans held hostage by separatist rebels in Irian Jaya, on the western half of New Guinea Island.

Two Indonesian hostages were killed by their captors, but three Indonesians, four Britons and two Germans escaped after the special forces launched the operation.

The Jakarta Post said the elite forces were restructured from three groups to five in June. It gave no other details.

"Prahowo has attracted great attention not only because he is President Suharto's son-in-law but he is viewed as a fast rising star in the military," the Post said.

Spinola, key figure in Portugal's 1974 coup, dies

LISBON (R) — Marshal Antonio De Spinola, the monocled colonial war hero who became Portugal's first president after the 1974 revolution, died after a respiratory illness in a Lisbon hospital early Tuesday, officials said. He was 86.

Spinola, a hero of Portugal's long African colonial wars, became the first president of the new Portugal born of the April 25 coup by young officers in 1974.

Five months later he resigned in protest against the leftist policies of the then ruling military junta and plans for the rapid dismemberment of Portugal's colonial empire.

He fled to Brazil after being accused of involvement in an abortive right-wing coup in March 1975, and was stripped of his rank of reserve general and expelled from the army.

But he returned to Portugal in August 1976, was reinstated with the rank of marshal and joined the Council of State which advises the president of the republic.

Spinola's book Portugal And The Future, published in February 1974, helped trigger the democratic revolution two months later.

The book proposed a political rather than military solution to the long and costly war Portugal had waged against guerrillas in its African colonies.

In the book, the craggy-faced former cavalry officer called for the African territories of Portuguese Guinea, Angola and Mozambique to join a federal structure in which they would have almost equal status with Portugal.

Spinola did not go so far as to advocate independence for the territories. Nevertheless his views were political dynamite to the then government led by President Americo Thomaz and Prime Minister Marcelo Caetano, which dismissed Spinola from his post as deputy chief of the armed forces general staff.

The dismissal provoked a major military and political crisis which put Spinola at the centre of power in Lisbon and launched a new era in which Portuguese leaders promised democracy after nearly half a century of authoritarian right-wing rule.

The young officers who staged the April 25 coup installed Spinola as head of a seven-man military junta of national salvation. He assumed power on May 15, 1974.

In its early days the new government disbanded the hated secret police, freed political prisoners, allowed political exiles to return to Portugal, and abolished press censorship.

In Africa, Portuguese Guinea gained its independence as Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique and Angola were set on the road to self government.

Antonio Sebastiao Ribeiro De Spinola was born in Estremoz, south Portugal, on April 11, 1910, the son of an inspector-general of finance during the 40-year dictatorship of Antonio De Oliveira Salazar.

Jordan Times

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Over with the subsidies

WHETHER IT is a calculated political risk or an outright political gamble that the state took on Monday by lifting direct subsidies on food and animal feed prices without waiting in vain for a consensus to emerge on tackling the issue is not an unimportant question in Jordan today. But it seems to be more important to political pundits, government watchers and government detractors than to the government itself. What seems to have been the question for the prime minister and his team all along was not whether a decision to lift the subsidies had to be taken but rather how it would be least painful for fellow Jordanians when actually implemented. The quintessential need for making the decision was never in contention, as far as the government — and dare we say many others as well — was concerned. For only through taking the last dose of the IMF-prescribed medicine was there going to be a true economic recovery, or any recovery at all, painful and agonising as the whole programme, and not just the last step, indeed was.

The prime minister's coorage and determination to do what he believes is in the best interest of Jordan cannot be overlooked either by foes or friends. The opposition parties and those who joined ranks with them in resisting this particular change, should at least acknowledge and recognise the fact that Mr. Kabariti was willing to put both his political career and the fate of his government on the line in order to do what is right for the country. The opposition and its allies, on the other hand, could claim for themselves the moral high ground, but nothing they could say or do would deter him from porsuing the goal of seeing the economic recovery programme to its logical conclusion and successful end.

Be that as it may, we now have a new situation to grapple with. One where there might no longer be a cross-party, general framework agreement on the IMF-prescribed programme (as has been evident from the emergence of the 24-member "total opposition" group and the other 32-member "half-way, compromise" committee in the Lower House); where more and bigger socio-economic problems pose themselves; where real hardships by the poor and needy amongst us can be faced; and where, at the same time, Jordan can begin to reap the fruits of the hard work that it has done in order to stand on its own feet, meet its commitments and have excellent relations with the rest of the world.

The government, we think, took the right decision under the circumstances, for even if there are problems and obstacles on the way, the end result is that Jordan will have succeeded in reducing its foreign debts and corrected basic structural deformities in its economy, with all this entails in fighting corruption, waste and smuggling.

But while Mr. Kabariti himself deserves to be praised for his persistence and consistency, and above all congratulated on the most valuable support that he received from His Majesty the King in this endeavour, the government can ill-afford to relax now that the decision has been made and implemented. The authorities need to monitor the implementation of the decision for any loopholes remaining in the compensation and the new pricing systems. In this regard, a mechanism for receiving complaints, verifying them and taking corrective action should be put in motion, as indeed has been proposed through a joint government-parliamentary committee.

More importantly, the government needs to build on its bold decision and move to correct other imbalances in the economy. Based on the experience with bread and fodder and other basic commodities, the government should gradually but surely pull out from all strictly private-sector activity. The government has taken some modest steps in that direction but many more are needed if the economy is to fully recover. Furthermore, it is with government bureaucracy and the legal system that reform should follow. And that will be neither a new nor easy undertaking. The first Royal Commission to reform civil service was formed in 1982. Numerous committees have since been formed, but without any tangible results. Likewise with the delivery of justice in our country. No more time can be wasted if the moves towards effective economic and social policies are to be fruitful.

Surely a government that can lift bread subsidies and emerge intact could carry still more reforms. Monday's resolution was a giant step. Will we see more steps in the right direction?

Washington Watch — By Dr. James Zogby

Our continuing dialogue with Clinton

ON AUG. 6 I had the privilege to lead a delegation of Arab American leaders to a meeting with President Bill Clinton and officials of the National Security Council (NSC) in the Roosevelt Room of the White House.

Our discussion with the president was preceded by a longer exchange between our delegation and Samuel Berger, Deputy Assistant to the president for National Security Affairs, and Mark Parris, special assistant to the president and director of the NCS's office for Near East and South Asian Affairs. The president then joined the meeting for the next 30 minutes.

While the entire session was "off the record" and, therefore, precludes the use of direct quotes, at a press conference following the meeting, attended by 21 of the Arab American leaders, we unanimously agreed that the president was open and sincere in his comments and we were at once impressed by the depth of his understanding of our concerns and pleased by his commitment to work with our community.

During the 90 minute meeting, we raised several issues, including:

— Our concern for the future of the peace process in the wake of the election of Benyamin Netanyahu — especially emphasising our concerns over the possibility of new settlement and road construction, Israeli policies in Jerusalem, and the deepening hardships endured by Palestinians as a result of the continuing economic blockade of the West Bank and Gaza.

— Our deep and continuing hurt over the failure of the administration to respond adequately to the suffering experienced by the people of Lebanon during the Israeli assault in April, and our concern that Israel was attempting to use Lebanon as a bargaining chip in the negotiating process.

— Our concern with the delay in reaching an agreement to implement U.N. Security Council Resolution 986 and the continuing hardship of the people of Iraq. We made clear that we did not want to see the regime of Saddam Hussein benefit from the situation, but we hoped that assistance could be forthcoming to the innocent people of that country.

— Our concern that anti-terrorism legislation might be used to unfairly target law-abiding members of the Arab American and American Muslim communities.

— Our concern with the growing anti-immigrant sentiment in the Congress reflected in both the recently passed Welfare Reform legislation and currently debated immigration reform bill. Both could have a negative impact by denying social service benefits to legal immigrants to the U.S.

Following a detailed and thoughtful discussion, we left the meeting assured that the administration understood these concerns and confident that they were working to resolve them.

This meeting was part of a continuing dialogue that this administration has had with Arab Americans. This dialogue has included two group meetings with the president, a number of private discussions that many of us have had with the president during the past several months, meetings with the vice-president, cabinet members and the president's national security staff, and an exchange of letters between myself and the president.

While not at liberty to directly quote the comments made on August sixth by either President Clinton or Mr. Berger, I can share several observations about their responses to our concerns culled from our own continuing dialogue.

1) Palestinians and the peace process

The administration remains committed to the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. In no way has their policy changed as a result of the recent elections in Israel. In fact, they are working to press the Netanyahu government to move forward and to honour all the commitments that the Israeli government has made to the Palestinians in Oslo I and II.

They are following closely the internal discussions and manoeuvring taking place within the new Israeli governing coalition. While wary of extremist elements that seek to set back the peace process, they also see some positive signs in recent weeks.

There is a sense that some of what the Netanyahu government is saying and doing is for domestic consumption in Israel. At the same time there are some positive statements that have been made with reference to honouring the Osln agreements and easing the economic hardship of the Palestinians. And even though some negative statements have been made regarding Jerusalem and settlements, these have yet to be followed up by specific negative actions.

Israel has been told on a number of occasions, both publicly and privately, that the Clinton administration views settlements as an obstacle to peace — an unhelpful impediment and possibly provocative.

With regard to Jerusalem, the administration has repeated its position that no action should be taken that would be provocative or might disrupt the peace process.

Even though this year's Democratic Party Platform repeats the position taken in 1992 that "Jerusalem is the capital of the state of Israel," the White House has authorised its spokespeople to respond to questions regarding the platform by noting that while this may be the position taken by the party, the president's position remains unchanged. That position is:

"Jerusalem is one of the most sensitive and volatile issues in the peace process. I remain convinced that it is unwise for the United States to take actions that could be interpreted as prejudicing matters, such as Jerusalem, which Israel and the Palestinians themselves have formally agreed to discuss only in the context of direct, permanent status negotiations."

At the same time, the administration continues to press for an end to the blockade of the Palestinian autonomous territories and is urging donor countries to be more forthcoming in providing needed economic assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

In a very telling comment made before a gathering of ethnic leaders who met at the White House last month, the president expressed his feeling about both the new paradigm established by the peace process and the need to provide greater help to the Arabs who have made peace. He said, "...there's a peace process going. But there are still desperate economic problems in Gaza and the West Bank. And as I've told everyone, when this peace process started three and a half years ago, the United States had an interest in the Middle East, when the Bush administration started the Madrid talks. But we had an obligation to the security of Israel. Today the United States has an interest in peace in the Middle East, an obligation to the security of Israel, and an obligation to the peace-loving Arabs who have stuck their necks out and risked their lives to try to promote the peace."

2) Lebanon and Syrian tracks

The administration has repeatedly made it clear that it is strongly committed to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. This is the first administration in many years to publicly state its commitment to U.N. Security Council Resolution 425. The president did so two times in his public comments following his April meeting with President Hrawi.

The administration says that a prosperous and independent Lebanon is necessary for the prosperity and stability of the entire region. At the same time, the administration insists that there must be forward movement on both the Lebanese and Syrian tracks for the peace process to succeed.

The administration made an effort since April to express its regrets for not having responded in a more timely and balanced manner to the suffering of the people in Lebanon during the Israeli attack.

In retrospect, it seems clear that the administration had made a tactical decision regarding the Israeli elections and the future of the peace process. On a number of occasions since April when speaking with Arab Americans, the president has spoken of his shock over the loss of so many Lebanese lives. Those who participated in the Aug. 6 discussion with the president left the meeting convinced of the administration's sincerity in this matter.

3) U.N. Security Council Resolution 986

We were told that a decision with regard to implementing Resolution 986 was imminent, and on the next day (Aug. 7) the U.S. did in fact announce that it was satisfied with the monitoring provisions and would go forward with approval for the oil-for-food resolution.

4) Anti-terrorism

Our delegation thanked the president for cautioning media and law-enforcement against jumping to conclusions after the TWA Flight 800 tragedy and the Atlanta bombing. He and others in the administration have frequently reminded the nation of the unfair accusations made against Arabs and Muslims in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing and the impact that this rush to judgement had on our community.

The regular access to the White House the administration has continued to provide to Arab Americans and American Muslims had enhanced the stature of both communities and given them greater confidence to function in the U.S. political mainstream.

5) Immigration

The president has on a number of occasions spoken out against the growing anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S. He opposed California proposition 187. While he did agree to sign the Welfare Reform bill passed by the Congress, he has made clear his intention to have its anti-immigrant provisions overturned in the next Congress. The president also has expressed his intention to veto the immigration bill that is currently being debated in Congress. While supporting efforts to stem the flow of illegal immigration, the administration cannot accept legislation that punishes the children of illegal immigrants by denying them education or health care.

The Aug. 6 meeting with the president was preceded by a two hour planning meeting that was attended by 22 of the 25 Arab American participants. At the meeting we developed our agenda of issues and forged a consensus position on how to frame our concerns. Given the diversity of the group, this was a significant development. The success of this effort gave our delegation a new sense of optimism about the future of our community and our ability to work together as a unified political force.

The 25 Arab American participants were selected by the White House Office of Public Liaison to reflect both geographic and political diversity. The Arab Americans came from 12 national organisations and 10 states. In an effort to expand the opportunity for more groups and individuals to meet the president, two-thirds of this group had not been present at earlier White House meetings.

This continuing dialogue with the president and his administration marks a new stage in the growth of the Arab American community's involvement in U.S. political life, one which the White House appreciates and recognises. It is a development of which we are proud, and on which we are eager to build.

LETTERS

Constructive criticism required

To the Editor:

REGARDING THE articles written by Mr. Ali Kassay in the Jordan Times 31/7/96 "Flamin' Games" and Dr. Yusuf Mansur's "Golden Entertainment" on 7/8/1996, I find it pathetic and yet oddly entertaining to read such articles from two self-appointed elites, one a columnist and the second a Ph.D. holder, who took it upon themselves to be judge and jury of Jordan Television's (JTV) coverage of the Atlanta Olympic Games.

One chose to depict the games by generalising that "watching other people playing games is grim enough" and by satirising those who presented them. In the very least, it would have been appreciated to comment on those games, not for any personal gains but out of personal initiative and love for these events. Maybe Mr. Kassay's sharp, omniscient pen could advise JTV on the proper conduct towards commentary on sport events since he is so good at pointing out his grim thoughts on sports in general. What happened to credibility through objectivity? Maybe a note of "thank you" would be enough for those so-called bad and uneloquent presenters who spent 24 hours a day toiling on these games. Perhaps such appreciation does not fit in Mr. Kassay's vocabulary.

Certainly not every one of these commentators has a Ph.D. nor do they have satellite channels, nor are they suave, eloquent and well-versed as the Europeans whom Mr. Kassay and Dr. Mansur covet. But, we, local viewers, would appreciate the benefit of the doubt, that we like to watch and decide what to watch not based on the personal preference of these gentlemen. It would have been beneficial for the viewers if those two distinguished, dissatisfied and discontented gentleman had been among those few bad commentators who, at least, contributed something to the games. They did not sit in their houses lamenting, but dedicated their time and energy reporting on the events. These volunteers certainly deserve our appreciation. Maybe Mr. Kassay could have shared and added his knowledge to that of those so-called, bad commentators instead of criticising, translating and satirising. Where were the Kassays and Mansurs when JTV needed them since they seem to know so much about TV commentaries? If these two elite gentlemen and others like them would stop writing and refrain from choking us with their personal biases and apathy and address the issues to the public we would all benefit. How can we progress if we keep reading about the negative without objectivity and due merit? Was the coverage of the games so negative? Was there nothing positive nor constructive? Perhaps televising the Olympic Games on JTV was not a giant step for mankind but certainly it was a small step for JTV to be able to televise such an event with all it entails. It was an effort to be appreciated. I humbly thank the Kassays and the Mansurs for their constructive criticism and suggest the import of foreign commentators to please the dissatisfied, discontented few.

Nasser Mirza
Amman

Privatisation is the solution

To the Editor:

I READ with interest "The story of Telecommunications in Jordan" (Aug. 10, 1996), and although we were slow to start development in this sector, the story is certainly one of success. Privatisation will definitely prove that we are on the right track, as it has proved itself to be the most effective remedy for any ailing services sector wherever it has been tried. However, in order to succeed, the private sector has to be given a fair opportunity to execute its projects without hindrance and without being construed as a government department having to abide by every red-tape idea ever conceived. The private sector can and will do its share provided it is given the freedom to move as quickly and efficiently as its capabilities allow.

Regarding Jordan Mobile Telephone Services (JMTS), and to set the record straight, a couple of points must be mentioned:

1. Our network now covers the areas of Amman, Salt, Madaba, Zarqa and Aqaba. We have also introduced coverage to some areas in the north, especially in and around Irbid and Mafraq, during the past month. The coverage will soon expand to include the Jordan Valley and the areas between Amman and Ramtha. We forecast the completion of the expansion before the end of September of this year. This puts us at least one year ahead of the schedule stipulated in our license.

2. Although our license provides for revenue sharing with the Ministry of Finance (20 per cent), the government is guaranteed payments totalling JD 38 million over the first five years from the issuance of the licence, regardless of the revenue of the company. Of this amount we have already paid JD 21 million.

As for the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, I believe its establishment did not come a day too soon. I trust it has a tremendous task ahead of it, one that can be efficiently undertaken only if all concerned parties offered their support. But it is very important to mention that by law, the minister of post and telecommunications is the chairman of the board of the commission, and at the same time, and also by law, he is the chairman of Telecommunications Corporation (TCC), which, technically, from the inception of the commission, has become an operator to be regulated by the commission. This fact makes the transparency of the commission questionable.

All in all, we at JMTS are committed to serve our 20,000 subscribers as efficiently as possible, providing them with a service that was very much needed. We hope to continue furnishing our services to our subscribers with assistance and support from the minister and other government organisations in the coming years.

Mithkal Asfour
General Manager
Jordan Mobile Telephone Services
Amman

IT OCCURRED TO ME... — By Ali Kassay

Give us this day our daily bread

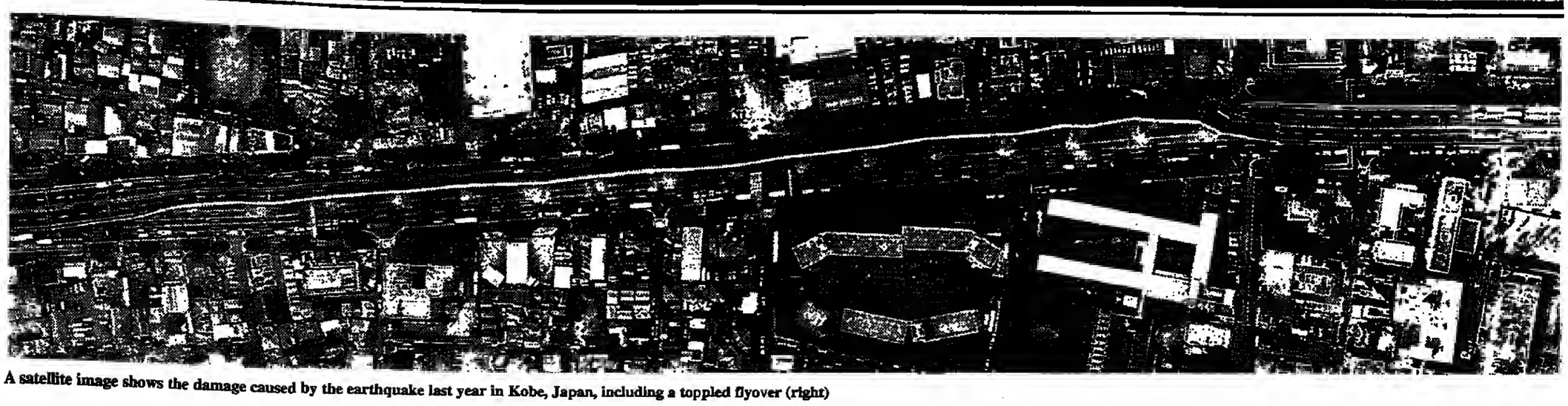
A CONTROVERSY of considerable importance appears to have been decisively resolved yesterday, with the announcement that the price of bread will be set henceforth at 250 fils a kilo. Though I admire decisive action as a general rule, I cannot help lamenting the end of the controversy. We rarely have one quite so juicy. You see, very often people are too shy to discuss controversial topics, and things come to pass before one has had the opportunity to savour the debate.

With the price of bread, things were different. Everybody had an opinion, and everyone expressed himself freely and with eloquence. Taxi drivers talked of nothing else while they ferried people to and fro. Barbers enlightened clients with their views as they trimmed the straggling tufts of hair around bald patches. Officials explained the merits of the move, and, disagreeing with Shakespeare that a Rose by any name smells just as sweet, they bestowed on the price hike the novel title: "Reorganisation of the system of subsidies." But all good things come to an end, which makes it important to rush in with an analysis of the possible outcome of this move, before the next economic decision is announced, causing the question of bread prices to be deleted from the collective memory banks.

Now, the average salary in Jordan is about JD 100, which is around 60% of the minimum wage in some European countries. In real terms, should Mr. Householder uses his honestly-earned salary exclusively for buying bread, and given the average family size of 6.8 members, each member can consume about two kilos of bread per day, and nothing else, which is compatible with the consumption pattern of many Jordanian middle-class families even before the readjustment. This being the case, Jordanians might start to negotiate their salaries and be paid not in dinars, but in kilogrammes of bread. The advantage then is that government offices will soon see the economic advantage of instituting a bakery as part of the accounts department, which will help immeasurably the fight against unemployment.

In terms of economics, the wealth of the country would be measured in terms of a new indicator, the Kiln of Bread per Day (KBD). The KBD, will soon gain international recognition as a more pertinent indicator of wealth in Third World economies, than many other indicators adapted from Western economies and based on the peculiar consumption patterns there. In due course, the KBD will form the basis for measuring the relative, absolute, and abject poverty lines. Such a breakthrough may be of sufficient importance to earn Jordan its first Nobel prize.

Given all this, I add my humble voice to the chorus that sings the praises of the new system of bread subsidies, as a sagacious move which will bring untold benefit to Jordan and Jordanians. The problem is to convince the other four and a half million citizens who whinge and moan instead of looking on the bright side of things.



A satellite image shows the damage caused by the earthquake last year in Kobe, Japan, including a toppled flyover (right)

Now you can watch Big Brother

By Edward Helmore and Robin McKie

TO ISRAEL they are a threat to its rocky hold over Arab territory. China is upset because its suppression in Tibet could be exposed, while Turkey fears its assaults on Kurds may be revealed.

Suddenly, commercial satellites are ruffling international feathers. And the particular focus of this fury is a new generation of privately financed spy probes, each capable of seeing objects only a yard across from the depths of space.

In the next few months, three of these new-generation, high-resolution satellites are to be blasted into space — launches that will raise critical issues of national security, individual privacy and the public's right to access information.

At the heart of the problem lies the cold war technology of deep-space monitoring of Earth, recently privatised by Bill Clinton's administration to maintain the United States's lead in commercial satellite expertise. The high-resolution sensors of U.S. spy probes — whose images were once placed before the eyes of security officials only — are now to become available for anyone with bucks to spare. The concept will revolutionise public monitoring of the environment, the scrutinising of peace agreements — and the gathering of television news. Experts predict the space imagery industry will be worth $6 billion by 2000.

Want to pinpoint the source of Russian river pollution spilling into the Baltic? Or do you want a picture of a bomb blast that military officials will not let you near? No problem. In each case, images supplied by companies such as EarthWatch, due to launch its first spy satellite later this summer, and Space Imaging Inc and Orbimage, which are both due to put satellites into orbit next year, will meet those needs.

"It's a technology of freedom for enlightened countries but a tool of terror for closed societies," says Mark Brender, a producer at ABC television's Pentagon bureau.

"We're entering an age of transparency and governments are uncomfortable with it. Those who embrace it will be stronger."

What is causing unease is the unsurpassed power of the cameras and sensors on board the new satellites. Experts say these instruments will be able to take photographs with at least 100 times more detail than their predecessors.

Take Space Imaging's $500 million eye in the sky. It will be locked into a sun-synchronous orbit (orbiting only over ground and sea that is in day-light), a path that will allow the satellite to provide an image of any site on Earth once every three days. Photographs will cost as little as $100 per-square mile of the targetted area.

Designed for the commercial market, these high-resolution images will benefit a wide variety of civilian purposes: from agricultural managers to urban planners, construction companies and public utilities. Such uses do not raise eyebrows.

What is causing concern is the idea that traditional sovereign rights are about to be redefined. According to the United Nations "open skies" policy, supported by the U.S., countries may still own the airspace above their territory. On the other hand, they cannot limit the operation of imaging satellites in space.

Hence Israel's fury over the threat that its Arab neighbours could use imagery bought from EarthWatch or Space Imaging to target missiles against it with pinpoint accuracy. Its diplomats are lobbying the White House to limit the resolution of pictures taken over its territory to 10 feet on the grounds of national security.

Similarly, bird's-eye views of China's suppression in Tibet, Indonesia's campaigns against the East Timorese and assaults by Turkey's forces against Kurds are also causing international nervousness.

Part of the concern lies with fears that the media will be freed from their dependence on government information during international crises and will be able to collect pictures so detailed that they will resemble views from a helicopter ride.

Mr. Brender's contention that it is a technology of freedom and transparency may seem pious. Still, the peaceful uses of spy satellite technology have precedents. President Lyndon Johnson once said that the first U.S. spy probes — which revealed that the Soviet Union was not stockpiling H-bombs and missiles with anything like the ardour that American generals had claimed — had justified the cost of the entire space programme. Experts such as Arthur C Clarke agree, and argue that the availability of spy-satellite technology will promote international stability. Neighbouring countries will be less quick to threaten each other when troop movements or missile silos are visible to all.

"The free availability of space imagery will have a stabilising effect on world affairs," says Bryan Webster, of Space Imaging. "The less possible it is for countries to be surprised, the less potential there is for conflict."

Intelligence agencies are likely to be the largest purchasers of high-resolution images from these new probes. Iraq will buy pictures of Saudi Arabia, Iran will seek those of Israel, and India and Pakistan will purchase images of each other.

The biggest loser is likely to be the U.S. government, which once used its spy satellites to maintain a huge military advantage over rivals — a superiority used with devastating success in the Gulf war.

Fearing it will lose this key advantage, the licences granted to spy-satellite operators by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration since 1994 include clauses giving the State Department the right to restrict broadcast data from a certain area when national security or foreign policy interests "may be compromised."

To the U.S. media, the wording of these regulations is too vague and amounts to "prior restraint" of their constitutional rights. Instead, they propose that the media should be free to impose self-censorship when there is a "clear and present danger" to security.

Critics say a state such as Israel could easily be seen as a foreign policy interest and, if restrictions were allowed, this would set a precedent that could lead to other blackout areas to accommodate the interests of the political party in power.

"The State Department's notion of a foreign policy problem would mean that any time a client state says it will be upset by this kind of imaging then restrictions will be introduced," says David Bartlett of the Radio-Television news Directors' Association.

The Observer

Raising bread prices a calculated step

(continued from page 1)

great as that of floating bread prices. While the government came under severe criticism for its policy on Iraq, which was initially seen as its primary mandate, and while its relations with Israel after the return of the right to power was the subject of many condemnations by the opposition, it was only over subsidies that it came close to facing a vote of no-confidence.

Forty-one deputies, including members of blocs that are represented in the Cabinet, had signed a statement expressing their rejection of the move. Opposition deputies threatened a no-confidence vote, and initial indications were that the people would resist it. Some even warned that raising bread prices would bring down the government.

But two months of thorough, at times tense, debate and what one official described as a close monitoring of the development of the people's reaction to the decision enabled the government to survive the move almost unscathed.

It is still too early to say, however, that the government can be assured of no negative reactions to its decision, with at least 24 members of the Lower House still speaking vocally against the government which broke the consensus of a group of another 32 lawmakers which was negotiating the move with it, and a number of opposition parties saying they will continue to protest the decision. Disturbances could develop, observers say, and not necessarily under the banner of the opposition. The riots of 1989, which followed the raising of fuel prices, set a precedent of unorganised violent public reaction to new economic hardships. People have not yet felt the impact of floating the prices and only after the decision is implemented will it be possible to say that the government has heard the end of the bread story, observers say.

So far, however, the government can claim success in handling what is seen as a highly sensitive move. A number of crucial factors was instrumental in guaranteeing this orderly turn of events, with both the government and the opposition taking credit for that — the government for its hard work in selling the move and the need for it as well as access to information inaccessible to others; the opposition for failing to provide an alternative.

Despite a clear initial confusion in announcing the move, the government managed to put the pieces back together, flooding the people with information aimed at showing that national interests make the step inevitable.

What the government eventually did was explain in detail why it had to hike bread prices, working hard at the same time to convince the public that they will suffer no extra burdens as a result.

The Kingdom, said Mr. Kabariti in a press conference he held to explain the issue last month, has all but completed the economic reform programme agreed upon with the IMF. If Jordan receives a clean bill of health, he said, the country will be eligible for grants and credit facilities to set up projects that could jump-start the economy. But if the IMF rules that Jordan did not implement the requirements of the reform programme, the country will not be eligible for support from the donor countries. That would mean big trouble for a country so strapped for cash and in dire need for foreign investment and financing, he said.

The issue of subsidies, said the prime minister, would be the one on which the IMF would base its assessment of the country, which has carried out the reform programme in a manner the IMF has found acceptable.

The amount of funds the budget allocated for subsidies, JD 38 million, would not cover half of the actual cost of the subsidies, due to the increase of wheat prices on the international market, the prime minister said. Maintaining the subsidies, he said, would mean incurring a budget deficit which the IMF simply will not allow to happen if the Kingdom is to stay on its good side.

Other government officials said that the country has already been rewarded for deciding to end the subsidies. A donors' meeting in Paris in July pledged $1 billion in project financing over a period of three years. Japan, which has reportedly insisted on lifting subsidies, is negotiating providing the Kingdom with a $90 million soft loan that could go into financing the budget deficit.

These positive achievements, among others, say government officials, rule out sacrificing the reform programme in order to keep the subsidies out of fear of the reaction to the move.

Officials say that investment in the first seven months is higher than that the whole of last year. They also say that the rapprochement in relations with the Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia to which the King ended "a successful visit" the day the bread price hikes were announced, will lead to the reopening of the Gulf markets to Jordanian goods and labour. That will mean an increased economic activity that could help people cope with the higher cost of living, they say.

More importantly, officials say, they could no longer procrastinate in heeding the IMF demand for ending the subsidies. The programme ends next year and lifting the subsidies was the last requirement. Previous governments have implemented other reforms under the programme. The government of Abdul Salam Al Majali, which shouldered the responsibility of signing the peace treaty with Israel in October 1994, introduced the sales tax. It could not also raise bread prices, its members argue. Neither could the government of Sharif (now Prince) Zeid Ben Shaker do so after making its own difficult decisions of raising the sales tax from five to 10 per cent and ending the economic boycott of Israel. So the task of lifting subsidies on bread and animal feed was left for the Kabariti government, which says the move will only lead to six per cent inflation instead for the four per cent projected for this year even though other estimates put the projected inflation at double digit figures. But government officials say that the compensation the government will offer to the people will partially offset this increase in the cost of living.

But the people wanted more. Their rejection of the decision was paralleled by demands for cutting down government expenditure and signs of extravaganza which many argued were wasting a considerable amount of public funds. There were questions about officials' trips abroad, about the cars they drive, about government give-aways to certain people and groups.

The government appeared to understand the impact, if only the psychological one, of adopting some austerity measures. Government officials, through press leaks and other means, explained that even if the government cut its travel expenditure by half, if it sold all the top-of-the-line Mercedes Benz ministers drive, the saved amount would be marginal in offsetting the deficit resulting from the subsidies bill. But along with this argument, the government announced measures to cut its spending.

All this happened as the mainstream press generally supported the government, which, through the information minister and other Cabinet members, succeeded in having its views prevail in the press coverage of the matter. While the information minister kept on providing the press with figures and arguments about the need to rechannel the subsidies and the government's determination to compensate citizens for the price hike, the opposition had no sufficient reservoir of information and research to counter the official views. Also, the opposition did not have the same leverage the government has with the major news organisations.

But these difficulties were admitted by the government, which told the people that national interests dictate that the burden is shared.

And the government did not, in any case, expect the move to provoke a public outcry. Since, officials maintain, every effort was made to compensate the citizens for the expected rise in prices and to put in place an elaborate system where compensations are promptly channelled to citizens. Over and above this, government supporters argued, no unrest should be expected because the situation today is different from 1989, when riots broke out over increases announced by the government in petrol prices. Unlike in 1989, the political environment is much more relaxed after six years of the democratisation process.

Political parties are operating in public and are in agreement with the government that unruly expression of opposition to the move cannot resolve the issue. Parliament and news conference were the forum for debating, and arguing over the matter, and the government appeared willing to take all the heat that it could face in such platforms. Besides, the dinar has remained steady in seven years, and the country has done well already in achieving reasonable rates of growth and low inflation rates. "An extra two percentage points in inflation figures this year will not exactly invite trouble," said an official. We expect even the opposition to admit that it did not do extremely well in opposing our action."

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PROCEEDS ARE FOR CHARITY

Arabs aiming for higher oil exports to Asia

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab oil producers are set to boost crude exports to Japan and China among other Asian countries with consumption forecast to increase steadily over the next few years, an official report has said.

Although producers from outside the organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) will likely account for a large part of the increase in global supplies, OAPEC members will see some benefits from the higher Asian demand.

"Asian countries, especially the developing nations, are set to rely more on Arab oil as demand there is growing and they are already heavily dependent on crude supplies from the region," the 10-oation OAPEC said io a study.

The report gave no figures for Japan but said demand in industrial countries in the Pacific Ocean would grow to 6.9 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2000 from around 6.6 million bpd in 1995.

Japan already iomports nearly 2.6 million bpd from Arab Gulf states, accounting for around 63 per ceot of its total crude purcbases. But Japanese officials have predicted the level could climb to oearly 70 per cent in 2000 as most of the increase in local consumption would be supplied by the region.

Japan has traditionally relied on Arab oil and it has a large shareholding in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) energy sector and in the Neutral Zone, an oil-rich desert strip sbared equally between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

The Far East industrial giant, whicb has one of the fastest growth rates in the energy sector, is banking on its strong political and commercial links with the Gulf region and its massive oil wealth, which accounts for more than 60 per cent of the world's total crude reserves of around one trillion barrels.

China, the second biggest oil consumer in Asia, has not imported crude oil from the region as it has produced enough for local consumption.

But it is gradually becoming a net oil importer because of a rapid growth in domestic demand. The gap between production and consumption is set to grow in the near future and this has prompted Beijing to set its eyes on the Gulf.

Chinese officials have made several trips to the region in the past two years and discussed oil purcbases for the first time.

Experts said Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Oman would likely become major oil exporters to China.

According to OAPEC projections, oil consumption io China would surge to around 4.2 million bpd in 2000 from 3.3 million bpd in 1995. The increase constitutes nearly 40 per cent of the total growth in the Asian demand.

South Korea, another key oil client of Gulf Arabs, is also set to boost crude imports from the region with demand rising to 2.3 million bpd from 1.9 million bpd over the same period.

Consumption in India, whicb also relies beavily on Arab oil, is forecast to grow to two million bpd from 1.5 million bpd while in Malaysia it will rise to 500,000 bpd from 400,000 bpd.

Demand will increase to one million bpd from 800,000 bpd in Indonesia, to 400,000 from 300,000 in Pakistan, to 700,000 from 600,000 in Thailand, to 800,000 from 700,000 in Taiwan and to 700,000 from 600,000 in Singapore.

Saudi Arabia, the world's top crude supplier, and the other nine OAPEC members produce nearly 18 million bpd, of which around 14.8 million bpd are exported and the rest are consumed locally.

OAPEC said consumption in member states was projected to grow to around 3.9 million bpd in 2000 from 3.2 million bpd in 1995.

UAE debt put at $11.5b

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is saddled with a debt of around $11.5 billion despite an increase in its oil earnings over the past several years, an official report has showed.

The figure includes $10.3 billion in short-term debt and the remainder is long-term, the Arab Corporation for Investment Guarantee (ACIG) said.

"The total debt accounted for around 31 per cent of the gross domestic product in 1995 and its servicing stood at $1.15 billion," the ACIG report said. It gave no details of the debt but the UAE, a major OPEC oil producer, has resorted to borrowing to finance a budget deficit and arms purchases.

The budget deficit was estimated at around 8.8 billion dirhams ($2.39 billion) in 1995, amounting to 6.6 per cent of the gross domestic product (gdp). The UAE currently produces around 2.16 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil under a quota agreement with the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries(OPEC).

The level is far higher than the 1.5 million bpd it produced before the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis. The UAE and Saudi Arabia sharply boosted oil output to make up for a loss of nearly four million bpd from the world market because of a disruption of crude supplies from Iraq and Kuwait. The production increase has pushed up the UAE's annual oil revenue to more than $11 billion from around $8 billion before the Gulf war.

Oil provides more than 80 per cent of the UAE's income and this has made its economy highly vulnerable to crude price fluctuations.

In 1995, the country's GDP surged by 6.6 per cent mainly because of an improvement in oil prices and higher expenditure by the government.

The Kuwaiti-based ACIG, an affiliate of the Arab League, also said the UAE was one of the main recipients of foreign investment in the region. An average $142 million annually have been pumped into the UAE in direct foreign capital during 1991-1994, the report showed.

Yemen faces stiff challenge to boost oil production

DUBAI (R) — Impoverished Yemen is facing a steady and potentially terminal decline in its oil production within three years unless new discoveries are made, foreign oil industry executives based in Yemen bave said.

Oil output in the Arab's World poorest country is running at 350,000 barrels per day (bpd) and is expected to rise modestly in 1997 and 1998 with new smaller fields brought oo stream by consortiums led by U.S. Hunt Oil and France's Total.

But these fields — which provide the government with the bulk of its revenue — are unlikely to compensate for plateau output from the country's main Masila field or revitalise the slow pace of oil exploratioo and limited development activity.

"The country back in the eigbties was once thought to be a mini-Saudi Arabia...Those bopes bave turned out to be wishful thinking," said a manager at a Western firm with exploration acreage rights in Yemen.

Neighbouring oil giant Saudi Arabia produces a mammoth eight million bpd, making its the world's largest oil exporter.

Output in Yemen is made up by approximately 180,000 bpd of Masila crude produced by Canadian Occidental Petroleum Ltd. and 170,000 bpd of Marib crude from a consortium led by U.S. Hunt and Exxon.

The yemeni government receives most of its reveoue by marketing 100,000 bpd of Masila grade and between 25,000 bpd and 30,000 bpd of Marib crude oil, a Yemeni official said.

Sales of Masila crude uoder term contracts were worth approximately $19 a barrel to the government on Tuesday, the biggest cootribution to state coffers whicb are weighed under by a debt of around $7 billion and limited revenue.

Government income is also aided by some exports of oil products from 60,000 bpd of crude sent to the Aden refinery.

But oil output from the leading Masila may bave already peaked unless new drilling activity succeeds in lifting output.

"Production will be down a little bit next year...It could be off by around five per ceot," one industry executive close to the Masila acreage said.

Masila, which came onstream in 1993, hit 186,000 bpd in March from an average of 174,000 bpd last year.

Drilling activity has also been subdued since the country's civil war in 1994, receot disappointing dry boles and major oil firms relinquishing exploration blocks.

"Exploration activity is relatively low. Right now there has oot been any receot successes to stimulate the industry," one executive said.

The slow progress in the oil industry highligbts the vital cbaracter of a massive liquefied natural gas (LNG) project wbich Yemen is planning to develop with total and other world firms.

Good news for the Sanaa government comes with Hunt's development of the Jannah block initial production of some 15,000 bpd expected early next year with potential as bigb as 50,000 bpd to 70,000 bpd.

Total is developing east Shabwa which is on line to produce betweeo 15,000 bpd and 30,000 bpd by the eod of 1997.

"These fields are a boom but the target of 400,000 bpd still appears steep uoless new companies appear and drill," another oilman based in Yemen said.

Progress in talks with Saudi Arabia aimed at resolving a border dispute and offering foreign firms better oil production sharing and cost recovery schemes has helped the investment climate in the country's oil sector, the sources said.

High oil prices sharply boost GCC income

ABU DHABI (AFP)— Oil export earnings of six Arab Gulf states in the first balf of 1996 hit their highest level since the oil boom of the early 1980s as crude prices climbed to a 13-year high, experts have said.

Despite fluctuating crude production by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, their revenues during the first half were the highest since 1983, they said.

"Compared with the first half of 1995, the GCC's earnings from oil sales increased by at least $2.5 billioo in the first half of this year due to the price improvement," an Abu Dbabi-based oil analyst said.

"Initial estimates showed the first half income stood at around $38 billioo , the highest six-month level sioce the end of the oil boom," he added.

The price of OPEC's basket of seven crudes averaged $18.83 in the first half of 1996 compared with $17.40 in the first half of 1995. Its previous highest level since the oil boom was in the first half of 1991, when it stood at $18.25 , according to OPEC's news agency OPECNA.

Oil prices have remained higb this year even thougb the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) produced nearly ooe million barrels per day (bpd) above its nominal output ceiling.

Iraq's imminent return to the oil market for the first time in six years, under a U.N.-agreed oil-for-food deal, has also failed to dent the high prices.

GCC states— Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)— produce around 13.4 million bpd, nearly one fifth of the world's total crude supplies. Around 11.5 million bpd of their output is exported, mostly to Japan and other industrial nations.

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

"Our auto insurance should pay for my gym membership—I gained most of this weight from eating in my car."

JUMBLE® THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

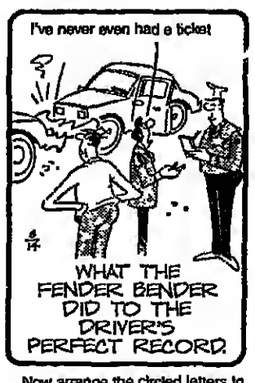
Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RUHTT

LIXEE

DIMPOU

UNTEAB



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

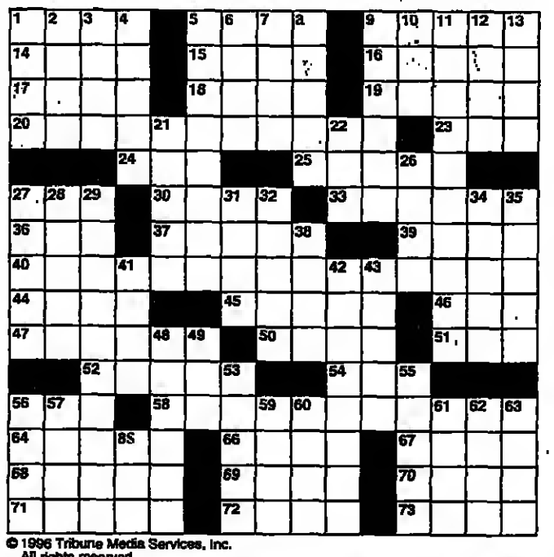
Answer here : A IN

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: GORGE SQUAB MUFFLE LATEST

Answer: Claiming to be younger made her this — AGE-"LESS"

THE Daily Crossword by Randall J. Hartman



ACROSS
1 — of honor
5 Sharp feeling
9 Wavy silk pattern
14 Aroma
15 Organic compound
16 Precedes circle or sanctum
17 Modena money
18 Neophyte
19 Sticker
20 Notorious gangster
23 Wrath
24 Successful venture
25 Cantaloupe, e.g.
27 Tasting place
30 Thailand
33 Puts an edga on
36 "— in the Family"
37 Schwarzenegger rola
39 QED word
40 Lillian Russell's flamboyant companion
44 Wablike fabric
45 Delection system
46 — Aviv
47 Aleut
50 — avis
51 Vane dir.
52 — Betty
54 Viewing sets, briefly
56 — Peulo, Brazil
58 Singer from Brooklyn
64 Anlic
66 Irene of "Feme" fame
67 Ripening factor
68 Go elong with
69 Exuberance
70 Penn or Connery
71 Hot brandy drink
72 Brawls
73 Sandwich type

DOWN
1 Barbie, e.g.
2 Chanteuse Adams
3 Former Wimbledon champ
4 Garbage
5 Written application
6 Author Seton
7 Standard
8 Despondency
9 Interior portion
10 Unspecified person
11 Bum up
12 Bring up
13 Perry's creator
21 Dancing style
22 Kan. neighbor
26 Finished
27 Soup spoon
28 Wented poster word
29 Slete
31 "No ifs, —, or buts"
32 Army officer
34 Burdened
35 Menner
38 Girl, in Guadalajara
41 Golda of Israel
42 Little green men?
43 Pleudit for Kiri Te Kanewe
48 Simian
49 Be obligeted to
53 More kind
55 Huge success
56 Tiff
57 Jason's ship
59 Hollywood composer Schifrin
60 Sketch
61 Double curve
62 Close in on
63 James Bond film
65 Nancy Drew's boyfriend

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B	A	D	E		M	A	R	I	A		S	T	O	P
O	B	O	L		I	B	E	A	M		W	I	N	E
H	O	R	S	E	S	E	N	S	E		I	G	E	T
E	M	S		M	U	L	E		R	O	V	E	R	S
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			H	E	E	L		S	C	I	L	L	A	S
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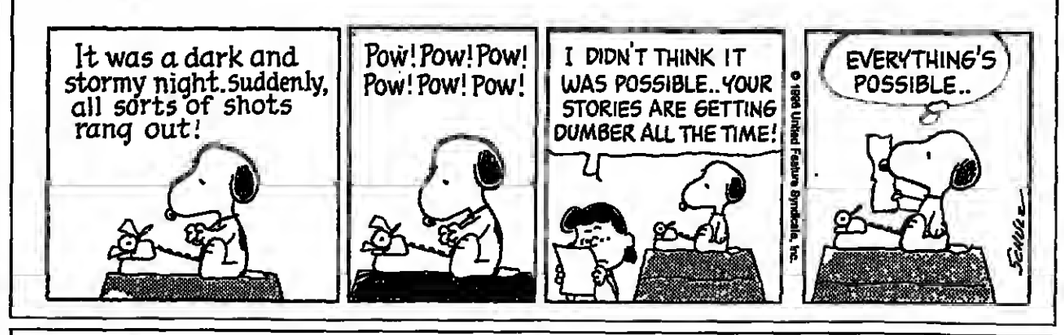
		A	D	D	P	T	S		L	I	E	D	E	R
I	N	D	I	T	E		C	H	A	R		I	R	A
N	O	D	E		S	H	E	E	P	S	H	A	N	K
S	U	L	U		T	U	N	A	S		E	R	I	E
O	N	E	S		S	T	E	L	E		R	Y	E	S

Peanuts



Andy Capp

Mutt'n'Jeff

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY AUGUST 14, 1996

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Whatever your mate wants you to accomplish today could be rather difficult. however, close friends are helpful in finding some solution. Later this evening you can meet with some adventurous person and have some fun.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 21) A fellow associate is oot helfpul today in putting across a plan of action which means much to you. however, a close friend can help you to make those in authority understand what is your idea and how to implement it.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) A superior understands a difficulty you are having today and has the solution to remove it. Clear up some outstanding credit matter quickly this evening before you discover that you are way beyond your head.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) This is not a good morning today to plan amusements, however, later tonight you get a sudden opportunity for fun in some recreational activity with some close friend and this time will make the next few days more pleasant.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You can await a better opportunity and day to solve any problematic affairs at home and concern yourself with business. This evening you should study any journals or publications which will have some valuable tips.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You have to be wise in communicating with others today especially those in authority in order to get your ideas across in such a fashion to make them completely understood. Be will to accept others assistance.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You may have practical annoyances to take care of today, however, give them enough time and thought to come up with an appropriate plan of action. Later tonight you can see a fellow associate and develop the answers to important business questions.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Use diplomacy today and don't try to be forceful with others, especially a bigwig or your fellow associates. Be alert to whatever is going on around you this evening and make some plan of action which is considered feasible.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you fuss over something today, you may injure your bealth and not be at you old self when it really counts. Your mate mny be irritated this evening about some difficulty, so keep calm and devise some good solution.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to Jan. 20) You may need the assistance today of a close friend. bowever, the cost may be too high so rely on you own judgement wbich bas not failed you yet. Go after your aims this evening and get results which will be pleasant.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Be wise and say very little in the business world today, considering you are there to learn from those who have the expertise which you desire. Don't try to be forceful with a prominent person or you can find yourself in a dilemma.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You have good judgement today on how to gain your aims, so trust your instincts and you will be quite successful. Avoid a schemer in the morning and be happy with close friends later this evening who have a good reputation.

Birthstone of August: Peridot — Golden

Jordan's NOPAIN becomes first Arab medicine to relieve U.S. headaches

By Ghida Aljuburi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Hikma Pharmaceuticals, a leading Jordanian pharmaceutical company, held an opening ceremony Monday to celebrate the company's first export of pharmaceuticals to the U..S. from an Arab country.

Established in 1978 in Amman, Hikma is quickly becoming a multinational pharmaceutical firm with subsidiaries in Portugal, Tunisiaa and Egypt as well as the United States said Financial Manager Nayef Kassis.

Company Products include antibiotics, cardiovascular drugs, anti-rheumatics, tranquillisers, analgesics, anti-diabetics and spasmodics, hormones, and a range of congh and cold preparations. Vice-President Mazen Darwazeh said the drug that was exported was an anti-inflammatory preparation effective in headaches, musculoskeletal pain, post operative pain and rheumatic diseases.

The prescription drug has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration(FDA). It is a naproxen sodium analgestic with the commercial name of NOPAIN and will enter into the generic market in competition with the American hrand name ANAPROX manufactured by Syntax Pharmaceuticals.

At this time, only one of its drugs will be exported to the United States, but officials feel that "this is the beginning and we hope to export more (different) drugs in the future" said Technical Vice President Ibrahim Jalal.

Shipments will start in late August and will be delivered to three laboratories in the United States: URL, Moore and Westward (the Hikma subsidiary in New Jersey). Government-approved distrihution channels will function privately with the first shipment priced at $150,000.

This being their first experience working within the American market, the company feels that the drug will be successful "because of the way drugs are prescribed in the United States," said Dr. Jalal.

Prescriptions taken to the pharmacy hy the patient only specify the scientific name leaving the patient the option of purchasing the brand name or the generic which can be about 40 per cent cheaper.

The ceremony was held at Hikma's main plant in Amman and attended hy Health Minister Aref Bataineh and the Director of the Ministry's Drug Directorate Maisa Al Saket. Dr. Bataineh announced that since a Jordanian pharmaceutical company has climbed to standards allowing its products to become FDA-approved, he hopes that it will maintain these high standards now that it is part of the international market promoting not only the Jordanian pharmaceutical industry but representing Arab involvement in the health care arena worldwide.

According to Ms. Saket, the significance of having a drug exported to the United States and what this means to Jordan is that "the quality of Jordanian drugs is equal to that of American products, because any drug exported to America has to be FDA approved. This approval means quality."

Hikma officials see this step as further Arab penetration into the American market in business, industry and health care.

Yahay, an employee with Jordan's leading Hikma Pharmaceutical Company, pastes labels in Amman Monday on the first ever consignment of drugs exported by an Arah pharmacuetical company to the U.S. market. Hikma succeeded in getting approval from the U.S. FDA to export a non-steriodal anti-inflammatory drug, a hreakthrough for the local drug firm which targets an increase in exports of a wide range of drug products to the U.S. market hy the year 2000.

DAILY BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Company to refinance real estate mortgages to start operation next month

** THE SECONDARY Real Estate Mortgage Company (SREMC) will commence operations next month, Yonsef Hiyasata, the director-general of the Housing and Urban Development Department, bas said. "Within days, a general manager and a full staff will be appointed and offices will be specified," he added noting that a board of directors has been named after registration procedures have been completed.

The company, in which the private and public sectors are participating, has already done the necessary and final arrangements to issue JD 300 million worth of bonds, Mr. Hiyasat pointed out. This amount, he explained, will finance the company's operations for the first three years and will be generated starting next month in the form of instalments as the sale of the bonds will depend on the dynamism of the market. Mr. Hiyasat indicated that the company will not depend on its JD 5 million capital to run its operations but will resort to issuing bonds to attract the savings of investors or other deposits from institutions which have long-term funds such as the Social Security Corporation, the insurance companies and pension funds.

Mr. Hiyasat noted that the company would mainly depend on these institutions to refinance real estate mortgages that will be provided to them hy the banks after securing the mortgages from the people who will be interested to benefit of the company's services.

He said that the work mechanism of the company will not involve building houses and will not deal directly with the public but will be limited only to hanks.

According to Mr. Hiyasat, the company has recently ohtained a JD200 million from the World Bank to be used for refinancing mortgages that will be offered to it from the day of starting operations until the company becomes able to issue bonds and attract funds. The company will provide its services to all sectors of the society especially the low and middle-income groups because they are the targetted sectors. Although, at the same time, investors in real estate and housing areas could also benefit the department, he said (Al Ra'i).

REUTERS | REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates — Prices as at 13/08/96 18:43

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.4742	0.6448	1.1997	107.70	1.3710	1516.20	1.6545	5.0430
OE Mark	0.6783	-	0.4372	0.8137	73.05	0.9297	1028.14	1.1222	3.4207
GB Sterling	1.5508	1.5508	-	1.8598	167.03	2.1281	2350.41	2.5648	7.8177
CH Franc	0.8335	122.79	0.5371	-	89.75	1.1419	1263.29	137.88	4.2024
JP Yen	0.0093	1.3878	0.5982	1.1132	-	1.2723	14.07	153.53	4.6814
CA Dollar	0.7294	1.0749	0.4700	0.8748	1.27	-	1105.50	1.2065	3.6770
IT Lira	0.0007	0.9714	0.4249	0.0791	1409.84	0.9037	-	10.90	3.3251
NL Guilder	0.6044	89.08	0.3895	72.51	85.06	0.8284	918.31	-	3.0483
FR Franc	0.1983	0.2921	0.1278	23.7747	21.33	0.2717	32.79	32.7900	-

Energy

Oils	Last	Previous
Brent	20.65	20.55
W. Texas	21.55	21.40
Bony	20.65	20.55
Dubai	18.52	18.55
UL Gas	199.00	199.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2668	0.3632	0.172	0.32011	28.7323
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.40151	0.17584	0.32689	29.341
KW Dinar	3.3434	4.93097	2.15857	4.01445	360.231
BH Dinar	0.3770	3.91083	1.71116	3.18471	285.796
CY Pound	2.1723	3.202	1.4005	2.6081	234.022

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	387.15	387.85
Silver (oz's)	5.04	5.06
Platinum (oz's)	398.25	399.25
AL (3 Months)	1506	1509
CU (3 Months)	1637	1640
Zinc (3 Months)	1039	1042
Lead (3 Months)	831	835
NI (3 Months)	7230	7250

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period / C'ncy	- 1 - Month	- 3 - Months	- 6 - Months	- 9 - Months	- 1 - Year
USD	5.09	5.18	5.34	5.68	5.53
GBP	5.75	5.67	5.90	6.00	6.09
JPY	0.30	0.42	0.56	0.38	0.81
DEM	3.26	3.25	3.30	3.12	3.43
FRF	3.79	4.00	4.10	4.10	4.18
CHF	1.93	2.06	2.18	2.25	2.40
ITL	8.81	8.83	8.55	8.53	8.46

Main Equity Indicies

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
NewYork	DOW JONES	5681.31	-32.18	-0.58	5729.03	5667.63	5713.49
Newyork	S&P 500	-0	0	0	0	0	862.1
London	FT-SE 100	3809.9	-0.8	-0.02	3811.5	3792.4	3810.7
Tokyo	NIKKIE 225	20668.6	115.55	0.56	20666.9	20448.7	20551.1
Paris	CAC 40	1976.09	-13.45	-0.63	1984.07	1973.01	1989.54
Frankfurt	DAX	2527.34	1.7	0.07	2530.78	2525.75	2525.64

Energy

Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	121.17	Spot
Cocoa ($/ton)	1418	Spot
Sugar ($/too)	385	Spot
Wheat ($/ton)	192	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	24.05	Spot
Tea (stg/kg)	112	Spot
Barley ($/bsh)	3.54	Spot
Rice ($/ton)	425	Spot

*** JOD Cross Rates**

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.0971	1.1026
OE Mark	0.4795	0.4819
CH Franc	0.5887	0.5918
FR Franc	0.1401	0.1408
JP Yen	0.8547	0.858
NL Guilder	0.4273	0.4294
IT Lira	0.0487	0.0489

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan

EMU deadline of 1999 would cost Britain 500,000 jobs — study

LONDON (AFP) — A drive by Britain to be a founder of a single currency would cost half a million jobs by 2000, business consultants have warned.

"If Britain wishes to join economic and monetary union (EMU) in 1999, the government would need to put in place restrictive fiscal and monetary policies in order to meet the Maastricht convergence criteria," the study hy accountants Ernst and Young said.

Policies to meet the Maastricht conditions on inflation and public deficits could cost three per cent of national income and 500,000 jobs hy the end of the decade, Ernst and Young calculated, using the same economic model as the Britisb Treasury.

The government would need to raise the basic rate of income tax hy at least four pence in the pound, and public spending would need to be "strictly controlled" in order to reduce the public deficit to below the required three per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

Britain's public deficit amounted to six per cent of GDP in 1995, according to official figures calculated in line with Maastricht norms.

Interest rates would have to rise to at least eight or nine per cent, "to keep inflation down to the European average and to keep the pound more stable against the Deutschemark than has been the case over the last few years."

The Bank of England's benchmark interest rate is currently 5.75 per cent.

If the government maintained its current policies, British economic growth should accelerate from 2.2 per cent in 1996 to 3.3 per cent in 1997.

"Falling interest rates, tax cuts and improving export market conditions should revitalise the economic environment over the next 18 months and allow unemployment to fall below two million," Ernst and Young said.

At the 1991 Maastricht treaty, Britain negotiated an opt-out clause allowing it to choose to join or remain outside a single European currency.

U.S. Census Bureau : Asian companies' growth doubles national average

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Companies owned by people of Asian and Pacific Island descent are launched at more than twice the rate of all firms in the United States, according to the Census Bureau.

Between 1987 and 1992, the number of Asian and Pacific Islander firms grew hy 56 per cent, compared with the U.S. average of 26 per cent, the bureau has said.

And while sales generated by all U.S. firms grew 67 per cent — from $2 trillion to $3.3 trillion — receipts at companies operated hy Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders shot up 163 per cent to $96 hillion, the bureau reported.

Average annual sales at Asian and Pacific Islander companies were $159,000 in 1992, about 40 per cent higher than five years earlier, according to the census report. The U.S. average was $193,000, while the overall figure grew 24 per cent during the period studied.

One in four Asian-American companies — or 153.096 firms in total — was owned hy someone of Chinese descent, the Census Bureau reported.

Korean-Americans owned 104,918 companies, 93,340 were owned by Indo-Americans, 68,675 by Japanese-Americans67,625 by Filipino-Americans and 59,674 hy Vietnamese-Americans, accor-ding to the census.

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Diego Maradona heads for Switzerland to kick drug habit

BUENOS AIRES (R) — A day after abruptly ending his stint with local side Boca Juniors, Diego Maradona said Monday he was travelling to a private clinic in Switzerland to treat a recurring drug habit.

"I'm doing this for my daughters who mean more than anything to me and I'm saying this so everyone knows I want to get totally cured," Maradona unexpectedly told local television.

"I'm told there's an 80 per cent chance they will cure my addiction. I'll make up for the rest with grit and courage."

The state news agency Telam said the former Argentine captain, who announced he was quitting Boca Juniors Sunday, boarded a plane for Switzerland at 10 p.m. Monday (0100 GMT Tuesday).

Maradona, 35, was twice suspended from soccer for using drugs — in 1992 when he was playing for Italian club Napoli and during the 1994 World Cup in the United States.

He has also been arrested for cocaine possession in Argentina.

"The Swiss clinic was recommended to me by a friend and I'm going because in Argentina many doctors instead of treating you and curing you just take your money," Maradona said.

"Besides, there is no knowledge about drugs here and many people have no idea how hard it is to get over a bout of depression and an addiction."

Maradona said that after the 12-day treatment he would visit his brother in Canada and then travel to Cuba to meet athletes who took part in the Olympics.

"I wanted to go to the United States but since they're not letting me in I'm going to Cuba," he said.

On Sunday, the scandal-prone midfielder said he was leaving Boca Juniors and hinted he might even retire. He later said he would play for at least one more year but gave no further details.

Maradona announced he was leaving Boca just before the team's penultimate match of the season against Estudiantes De La Plata Sunday. Boca lost 2-1, dashing their title hopes.

"It's all my fault what is happening to Boca right now," he said before the game.

Maradona, whose contract with Boca lasts until December 1997, missed a crucial penalty last week in a 1-0 defeat to Racing Club. It was his fifth consecutive penalty miss.

Maradona said last month he had turned down an offer by a Japanese club because he wanted to lead Boca to the championship title.

Argentine soccer legend Diego Maradona stares at the ground at the end of the game Boca Juniors against Estudiantes De La Plata. Maradona said he was quitting the Boca Juniors and hinted he might even retire after his team lost 2-1 which dashed their slim hopes of winning the league championship (Reuter photo)

Pagnozzi named Italian soccer federation boss

ROME (R) — The Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) Monday appointed its own Secretary General Raffaele Pagnozzi as the temporary head of a Italian soccer federation left leaderless after a bitter election battle.

Pagnozzi was formally named as an "extraordinary commissioner" — only the fourth such appointment in an Italian soccer history dating back to 1898 — to run the Federcalcio with immediate effect.

His most recent task was to lead Italy's delegation to the Atlanta Olympics.

"It was a difficult decision," CONI President Mario Pescante told reporters after a five-hour meeting.

"We did not want to humiliate the soccer world. The decision came late because of the doubts of Antonio Matarrese, who said that he believed there were several clubs ready to take legal action to challenge the measure."

The appointment had been widely expected after representatives of the country's professional and amateur clubs failed to pick a replacement for outgoing Federation President Matarrese last Tuesday.

Pescante said Pagnozzi would have wide-ranging powers and would not be merely a figurehead.

Matarrese, who came under fire after Italy's lacklustre showing in Euro 96, resigned after being challenged for his job by Luciano Nizzola, president of the league which groups Serie A and B clubs, and Serie C President Giancarlo Abete.

Despite two votes in a 14-hour meeting last week, neither of the two claimants to the post were able to secure the required backing of a third of each league to be elected.

CONI officials said after that fiasco, dubbed the "longest and most miserable day in Italian soccer" by the daily Gazzetta Dello Sport newspaper, another election was unlikely to be called for several months.

The Serie A league season gets underway on Sept. 8 but the full list of the 1996-97 match fixtures has yet to be published beyond the first 10 days.

Italy also has an important World Cup qualifier against Moldova on Oct. 5 with national coach Arrigo Sacchi's tenure still in doubt despite his having signed a contract under Matarrese to take the team through to 1998.

Pagnozzi's appointment was aimed at bringing order to the chaos and also ensuring that the federation is represented at an important UEFA meeting scheduled for Thursday in Geneva.

Matarrese will also be present at that meeting but only in his capacity as a UEFA and FIFA vice-president.

Italy's Serie A and B clubs are due to meet again in Milan on Aug. 26 to discuss the season's fixtures and also debate again the candidacy of Nizzola.

Swinburn back with victory

LONDON (R) — Walter Swinburn made a triumphant return to race-riding Monday more than six months after suffering life-threatening injuries in a fall in Hong Kong.

The jockey's frustrating spell on the sidelines was all but forgotten as he steered 5-1 favourite Talathath to victory at Windsor races in his first ride since the fall.

Swinburn, 35, the winner of the Epsom Derby three times, came back to a tremendous ovation.

"I just wanted to come back and ride. But to have a winner on top of that is something I really won't believe until I get home tonight" he said.

"I really appreciate all the interest and I think I got a bigger round of applause than the three derbys put together."

"I've had so many messages of support but it would be wrong to single out anyone. Each and everyone has meant an awful lot to me.

Argentine striker told to get a haircut

AVELLINO, Italy — An Argentine striker hoping to join Italian Serie B soccer club Avellino was told he must get a haircut before terms could be discussed. "First get your hair cut, then we'll talk about tests and fees. We've never had room for people with long hair at Avellino," Club President Antonio Sibilia told 26-year-old striker Leonardo Ricatti when he arrived Sunday. He gave the player a day to "get himself in order." Ricatti greeted Sibilia's order with a smile, without indicating whether he would comply. The striker, formerly of Argentine clubs Boca Juniors and San Lorenzo, had been recommended to the southern Italian club by compatriot and former Avellino player Ramon Diaz. The photograph shows Ricatti (left) posing in the field of Avellino with Sibilia (Reuter photo)

Olajuwon weds in prearranged marriage

HOUSTON (AP) — Following the Islamic custom of pre-arranged marriages, Houston Rockets star Hakeem Olajuwon wed Dalia Asafi last week in a traditional ceremony.

"There is no dating process, no boyfriends and girlfriends in Islam," Olajuwon said in a statement Monday. "Families meet, talk, get to know one another. Then the marriage is arranged."

Olajuwon, 33, was born in Nigeria and reared as a Muslim, recommitting to the Islamic faith as an adult. He is now a U.S. citizen and played for the U.S. team that won the Olympic gold medal in basketball.

Olajuwon worshiped for years at the same Houston mosque as the 18-year-old bride's father. But since men and women are separated when praying, he did not meet his future bride or her mother until a meeting was arranged.

"In the Islam faith, it is customary for a girl to marry much younger than they do in America, at age 15 or 16, for instance," Olajuwon said. "Dalia may be 18 in terms of age, but because of her background, beliefs and religious understanding, she, like many other Islamic young women, possesses a maturity, knowledge and wisdom beyond her years."

They were married Thursday in Houston. It is a first marriage for both. Olajuwon has an 8-year-old daughter, Abisola, from a prior relationship.

"It was a very private ceremony with just family," said Pamela Greaney, Olajuwon's personal assistant. "They're both very happy."

Ms. Greaney said Dalia Olajuwon, who wants to study medicine, received a $1,000 scholarship from the athlete's The Dream Foundation in June.

Ms. Greaney, who is administrator of the charity, said Dalia Olajuwon probably will have to return the scholarship because family members of those involved in the foundation cannot receive a scholarship.

Last month, Olajuwon signed a $55 million, five-year contract extension with the Rockets.

Olajuwon leaves Sunday for Australia, where he will join other NBA players in appearances. Ms. Greaney did not know if Olajuwon would be accompanied by his wife.

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NORTH
♠ J 9 4
♡ A Q 5 2
♢ Q J 10 9
♣ A Q

WEST
♠ 3 2
♡ J 10 9 8
♢ K 7 6
♣ J 9 8 2

EAST
♠ K 3 5
♡ K 7 4
♢ 8 5 4 3 2
♣ 6 4

SOUTH
♠ A Q 10 7 6
♡ 6 3
♢ A
♣ K 10 7 5 3

The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1NT	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♡	Pass	6♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: Jack of ♡

In a vacuum any finesse stands a 50 percent chance of succeeding — either the right defender will have the key card or it will be with the other. That does not mean it makes no difference which finesse you take. Consider this deal.

Despite holding three cards in partner's major, we think we would have rebid three no trump with the North hand. Once North chose to raise spades, South blasted into an optimistic six spades on finding out that there were enough aces in the North hand to guarantee that two hearts would not be lost on the fly.

West led the jack of hearts, declarer tried the queen and East's king won. The heart return was taken in dummy and three rounds of trumps were drawn. After cashing the ace and queen of clubs, declarer came to hand with the ace of diamonds and tried to run clubs. Unfortunately the jack of clubs had to score the setting trick. Note that trying to ruff a club in dummy would also have failed.

Even had the heart finesse succeeded, the slam would not have been guaranteed — there were still the fourth and fifth clubs to be handled. Declarer overlooked the power of the diamond sequence in dummy.

South should rise with the ace of hearts at trick one, then draw trumps with the help of repeated finesses. After cashing the ace of diamonds, declarer crosses to the queen of clubs to lead the queen of diamonds. Whether or not East covers, declarer discards the losing heart. After regaining the lead, declarer re-enters dummy with the ace of clubs, takes two club discards on the table's high diamonds, then claims the rest. Making six-odd.

Paraguay suspicious over Argentina injuries

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — Paraguayan soccer officials said Monday they were worried and suspicious after two of their top players were injured in the Argentine championship less than one month before the countries meet in a World Cup qualifier.

"We don't want to think this but it seems that they are going in very hard on our players with a view to keeping them out of the match," said Jimmy Irala, Paraguay's national team coordinator. "we are worried."

Four Paraguayan internationals play their club football in Argentina including temperamental Jose Chilavert, the self-styled "best goalkeeper in the world," who is based with champions Velez Sarsfield.

The two countries meet in a South American World Cup qualifier on Sept. 1 and bad feeling is already in the air after Diego Maradona's prediction of a 5-0 win for Argentina.

Irala, whose views have been echoed by the Paraguayan media, said the worst incident was a tackle on Chilavert last week by San Lorenzo's rugged defender Oscar Ruggeri, a former Argentine international.

"From the way Ruggeri went in, it seemed that he wanted to cause Chilavert an injury," said Irala in a telephone interview from the Paraguayan Football League's (LPF) headquarters in Asuncion.

"That's how it came across from the way he went in," he said, adding that Chilavert and Ruggeri were old foes.

The alarm bells were again ringing when midfielder Roberto Acuna, who plays for Independiente, had to be substituted after suffering another heavy tackle, also last week.

Chilavert, who this season has scored two goals from free kicks and one from a penalty in the Argentine championship, played for Velez Sunday and Acuna is still expected to be fit for the crucial match.

LPF official Juan Angel Napout told reporters in Asuncion Monday: "I hope the situation doesn't get any worse and that we get there in one piece."

The Paraguayan media gave ample space to the subject over the weekend with many commentators voicing the same concerns.

Argentina desperately need to win in the match, having drawn their last game 0-0 with Peru and lost the previous one 2-0 to Ecuador.

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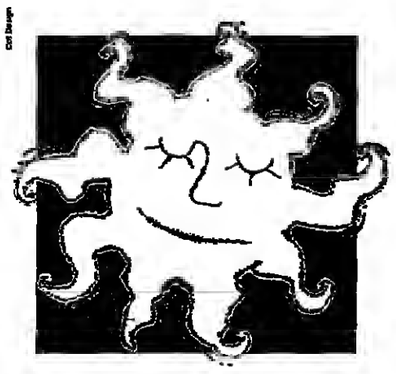

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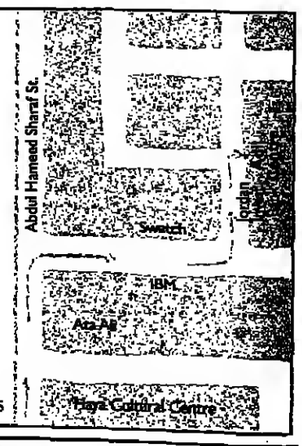

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Johnson, Morceli to miss big Zurich payday

ZURICH (R) — Olympic success has taken its toll on the bodies and the bank balances of champions Michael Johnson and Noureddine Morceli, two of the biggest names in athletics.

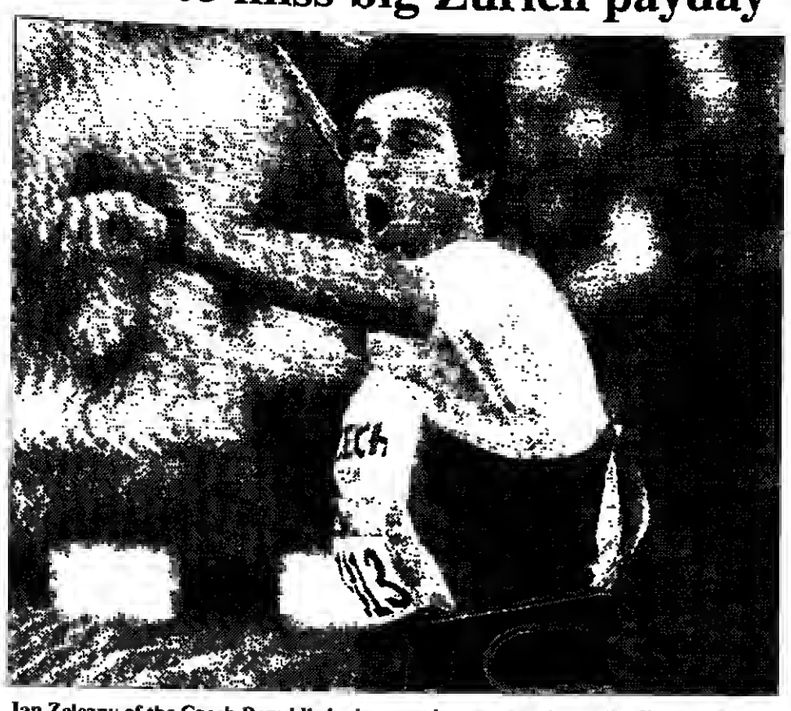
American 200 and 400 champion Johnson and Algerian Morceli, the winner of the Blue Riband 1,500 metres in Atlanta, have been forced to pull out of the world's richest meeting in Zurich Wednesday because of injuries picked up at the Olympics.

Organisers said Johnson would miss the "Weltklasse" event because of an injury on his knee which he hurt during his historic double on Atlanta's hard track.

Morceli will also be absent because he is still struggling with a problem with his ankle which was spiked during his Olympic triumph.

The duo will miss out on the sport's biggest payday in the Swiss financial city where world records are rewarded with kilos of gold and an athlete such as Johnson can pocket at least $70,000 just for turning up.

Last year the American was offered nearly $3,000 a second to break the 400 metres world record.



Jan Zelezny of the Czech Repuhlic is shown as he competes in the javelin competition finals at the Olympic Stadium in Atlanta during the summer Olympics. Zelezny won the gold medal in the event, the first athlete in 70 years to successfully defend an Olympic javelin title (Reuter photo)

Czech Olympic javelin champion Jan Zelezny is also not competing because his throwing arm is hurting after a trial for the Atlanta Braves hasehall team last week.

There are also questions over American Olympic high hurdles champion Allen Johnson, who is suffering with a problematic wisdom tooth, and Burundi's 5,000 metres champion Venuste Niyoogabo who has a problem at the hase of his hack.

Veteran Jamaican sprinter Merlene Ottey also has a back problem hut should be able to run the 100 metres. But American triple jumper Mike Conley and Algeria's female middle-distance runner Hassiha Boulmerka have only 50 per cent chances of competing.

The men's 100 metres should provide ooe of the highlights of an eveoing which crams most of the Olympic Games' main events into a few hours. The worldwide sale of the lucrative television rights finances the athletes' thick pay packets.

Canada's Olympic sprint champion Donovan Bailey will take on Atlanta bronze medallist Ato Boldoo and Britain's former champion Linford Christie over 100 metres. Namibia's silver medallist Frankie Fredericks is due to run the 200 metres.

Bailey said last week that he was keen to take on Johnson in a lucrative showdown over 150 metres during the Grand Prix circuit in the next month which will take the Canadian to Zurich, Cologne, Brussels and Berlin.

But Bailey said the race, which has yet to be finalised in view of Johnson's injury, would oot affect his standing as the world's fastest man or Johnsoo's title as the most versatile sprinter in history.

"At 150 we'd both be running a distance that would not affect anything. I'm looking forward to it," he said.

Zurich organisers refused to say whether they had hilled any record-breaking attempts Wednesday's programme despite the array of leading athletes oo view.

"The past, however, has shown that athletes are very much motivated to produce top performances because of the huge money oo offer. If the Zurich weather is good, anything can happen in what is always a packed Letzigruod Arena.

Burundi's Venuste Niyongaho throws his hands np in victory as he crosses the finish line to win the gold medal in the men's 5,000 metre run at the Olympic Stadium Sunday. Paul Bitok of Kenya took silver and Khalid Boulami of Morocco took bronze (Reuter photo)

Arsenal release manager in shock pre-season move

LONDON (R) — English Premier League club Arsenal ended their uneasy relationship with manager Bruce Rioch in a shock move Monday when they said he had been released after only 13 months in the joh.

. The London club said in a statement: "The board have decided that it was in the best long-term interest of the club that Mr. Rioch should now leave."

His managerial reign at Highhury is the shortest in the past 50 years.

Rioch took over at Arsenal in 1995 after former manager George Graham left in disgrace following transfer irregularities.

He hroke the Arsenal transfer record by signing Dutch international Dennis Bergkamp for £7.5 million ($11.5 million) from Inter Milan and also signed former England captain David Platt from Sampdoria for £4.75 million ($7.3 million).

But any hopes the club had that the appoiotment of Rioch would bring calmer times after the lengthy scandal surrounding Graham were soon dispelled.

He was involved in a series of disagreements with officials and was said to have clashed several times with the club's England striker Ian Wright. He also upset the board of directors by refusing to sign a contract until recently.

The club said in their statement they expected to name a successor shortly. In the meantime, assistant manager Stewart Houston and coach Pat Rice would be in cootrol of team affairs, just five days ahead of the start of the new English soccer season.

Former arsenal striker Alan Smith said he was "totally amazed" hy the announcement.

"I knew that he had recently signed a new contract and was just waiting for it to be counter-signed hy Arsenal," he said.

"I am surprised, but you don't know what happens behind the scenes at a club. With all their rivals around the country making big signings, the fans can get unhappy.

"I don't know if there was a clash between him and the board hut it would seem that way."

Press reports said some of the club's directors thought Rioch had paid too much for Bergkamp a year ago and also complained he had failed to make any major signings this year ahead of the new season.

Former Arsenal manager Terry Neill said he had thought Rioch's departure was on the cards.

"I don't think I'm that surprised as there have been mumhlings and rumhlings, and innuendo to that effect," he said.

"Arsenal have ohviously sat down and decided that's not for them. They want to be positive for the new season. It's just unfortunate for Bruce."

Arsenal midfielder Paul Mersoo said he was shocked by the news.

"It is just unbelievable. We've had some hard friendlies and got beat, hut I wouldn't have thought that was anything to go hy because it (the new season) all starts Saturday," Merson said.

"We didn't hear anything. Four or five days before the start of the season I don't think it's fair on the fans or the players."

When asked about a successor, Merson added: "I haven't seen anyone around the ground. The sooner the better though because it's never happened to us before.

"When George Graham was sacked it was towards the end of the season. Now there is going to be a lot of change. We'll just have to wait and see."

Riley accuses NBA of vendetta against Heat

MIAMI (AP) — Pat Riley, suggesting a vendetta against the Miami Heat, accused the National Basketball Association Monday of breaking its own rules in allowing Juwan Howard to return to the Washington Bullets.

"We did not forget how to add," Riley said. "... The only thing we miscalculated was somebody's animus for us."

Riley, speaking by conference call in his first public comments on the dispute, said the league went behind the Heat's back to broker a deal with Howard, the Players' Union and the Bullets.

"We were treated totally unfairly in this whole process," Riley said. "They made up the rules as they weot along."

NBA spokesman Chris Brienza said the league had no commeot on Riley's charges.

The coach, entering his second seasoo as Heat president and coach, said NBA Commissioner David Stern broke the oew collective bargaining agreemeot by allowing the Bullets a one-time exception to the salary cap to resign Howard and not submitting to binding arbitration with the Heat.

"They simply wanted Juwan to go back to Washington, maybe with the new arena and all," said Riley, referring to the Bullets' oew arena still uoder constructioo.

The NBA said the Heat violated the salary cap because it did not count performance boous in contracts to free agents. Riley said it didn't have to because all the incentives had never previously been met hy the player or the Heat, as the bargaining agreement stipulates.

The NBA counters that incentives likely to be achieved — such as winning 43 games — must he counted.

But Riley says the league initially approved all the Heat's contracts line hy line for Howard and fellow free agents Alonzo Mourning, P.J. Brown and Tim Hardaway. Over seven years, Howard was to he paid $98 million and Mourning between $105 to $110 million.

"Later, we get this terse telephone call," Riley said. "Ohviously, they didn't want to try to talk it out."

Neither Stern nor Howard would return Riley's phone calls. Over the weekend, he discovered the Bullets were allowed to resign the 23-year-old forward, who averaged 22.1 points per game last season, for $100 millioo.

"The day Juwan Howard signed the contract with the Washington Bullets was the day I hit a new low in my 30 years in the NBA," Riley said. "I knew at the time, ooce he signed that contract we wouldn't get him back even if we won it in the Supreme Court."

Edberg displays old magic in Indianapolis

INDIANAPOLIS (R) — Ninth-seeded Stefan Edberg of Sweden felt the magic once again, racing past 99th-ranked Michael Tebhutt of Australia 6-2 6-2 Monday in the first round of the $1.04 million RCA Championships.

"I felt really good out there," Edberg said after the quick, one-hour match. "Luckily, I got off to a good start. Overall, I was quite happy the way it went."

Olympic douhles gold medallists Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde of Australia scored with solo performances Monday. The reigning four-time Wimhledon champions are taking a break from douhles this week to concentrate on their singles game.

Tenth-seeded Mark Woodforde saved two match points to move into the second round with a 4-6 6-3 7-5 victory over American Wade McGuire. The 14th-ranked Woodhridge had an easier time in winning 6-3 6-4 against 82nd-ranked compatriot Scott Draper.

Top-seeded Pete Sampras opens his qnest for a third Indianapolis title Tuesday against 300th-ranked qualifier Don Johnson. Sampras, who celehrated a hirthday Monday, has won four titles this year, but none since April.

Second-seeded Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia and third-seeded Andre Agassi play their opening round matches Wednesday.

All the top eight seeds received first round hyes.

The 26th-ranked Edberg, retiring at the end of the year, played Tehbutt like he used to play everybody back when he was number one in the world in 1990 and 1991.

"I know I can still play some good tennis, there is no question about it," Edberg said. "Bnt the prohlem is maintaining it day after day. The good thing is getting a quick match in the beginning of the week because it is going to be a long week if I keep winning."

Edberg hroke Tebhutt's serve twice in the first set — in the third and fifth games. In the second set Edberg cruised to a 5-1 lead.

Tied at one set apiece, the 27th-ranked Woodforde saved two match points on his serve in the 10th game to even the third set at 5-5. He went on to win the next two games to take the match.

"I just finally sqneaked it out, hopefully, maybe, on experience," Woodforde said. "It is nice to come back after match points down. It means you want to win the match and you didn't give up hope."

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On the occasion of the Independence Day of India, a flag-hoisting ceremony will be held on Thursday, August 15, 1996 at 9:00 a.m. at the premises of the Embassy of India, First Circle, Jabal Amman (opposite Malhas Hospital).
All Indians and persons of Indian origin in Jordan with their family members are cordially invited to attend the function.

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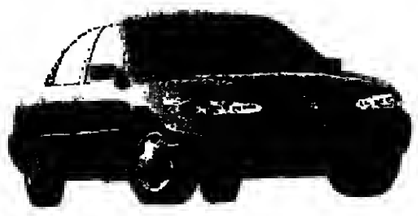

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SUPER BABY

Eighteen-mnnth-old Zack Strenkert, who is 0.9 metres tall and weighs 30.8 kilogrammes, drinks from a bottle as his parents, Laurie and Chris Strenkert look nn. Zack, who weighed 10 4.7 kilogrammes at birth, has been growing in extraordinary spurts ever since (Reuters photo)

Gaza police arrest rights worker over report of suspicious death

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian police arrested the head of a human rights group overnight after he implicated security services in the mysterions death nf a man after qnestinning by pnlice, Palestinian officials said Tnesday.

Mohammad Dahman, director of a prisoners' support group called Al Damir (Cnnscience) and a member nf the Pnpular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), was arrested at his home overnight, security officials said.

He was later charged with publishing "false and provocative lnfnrmation" against the Palestinian Nafional Authority and was remanded in custody for 48 hours, they said.

Mr. Dahman's arrest came just hours after Al Damir issued a statement calling for an investigation into the death last week of a 24-year-old Gaza man, Nahid Dahlan, follnwing interrogation by Palestinian pnlice. Attorney General Khalid Al Kidrah confirmed that Dahlan had been questioned daily nver a period of a week hefnre his body was found near his home in the village of Zweideh nn Ang. 7.

Mr. Kidreh said an autopsy found that dahlan had committed suicide by swallnwing insecticide. "The autopsy found no traces of torture or mistreatment on his hody," he told AFP, adding that Dahlan had personal and financial problems.

He would not comment on why police had been interrogating the man.

But in its statement nn the incident, Al Damir described Dahlan's death as a murder and called on the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) "to reveal and announce the murderers and take legal action against them." the Gaza incidents came at a time when Palestinian security services are under increasing public scrutiny following charges of torture and other excesses in the Palestinian autonnmnus areas.

Three policemen were given long jail terms early this mnnth after being charged with torturing a prisoner to death in a nablus jail, and police shot and killed a man in the West Bank town of Tulkarm during a violent protest nutside the local prisnn.

The PNA on Tuesday banned a public meeting in Nablus called hy members of the elected Palestinian legislative council to discuss the incidents.

Amnesty International has condemned the use of torture in Palestinian prisons, and launched a campaign in favour of one brutally tortured inmate, the daily Norwegian aftenposten quoted a spokesman as saying tuesday. The Director nf Amnesty's Norwegian Branch, Jan Borgen, wbn has just returned from a one-week trip to the Gaza Strip, tnld aftenpnsten that the situatinn in prisons there was "worse" than he had expected.

He said he had presented Palestinian authorities with "information on serinus ahuses concerning half nf the snme 400 (Palestinian) political prisoners."

Mr. Borgen said seven inmates had died in Palestinian prisons since September 1993, which marked the beginning of Palesninian autonomy in the west hank and Gaza Strip.

This week amnesty began campaigning for a 31 year-old prisoner from the west hank, whose life is threatened, Mr. Borgen said.

He said Nasser Joma was ahused the same night another prisoner, Mahmud Jemayel, succumbed to injuries after being tnrtured.

The Aftenposten said last week that Joma had been seen by other fellnw inmates, "iying on the ground, wearing only underwear, his hody marked with hruises and numerous hurns."

"We call on Yasser Arafat to clearly distance himself from torture and to take steps so that this kind of ahuse does not happen again in Palestinian prisnns," Mr. Borgen said.

Mr. Bnrgen, who travelled to the Gaza Strip with Liz Hodgkin, an Amnesty delegate in charge of the Middle East in Lnndon, was nnt able to meet with Arafat. Amnesty urged countries contrihnting to the Gaza Strip's development to put pressure on the Palestinian anthorities to respect human rights.

NATO commander inspects Serb base

HAN PIJESAK, Bosnia-Herzegovina (Agencies) — The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) ground forces commander in Bosnia Tuesday successfully carried out an inspection of a military site that is believed to be the lair of Serb army chief Ratko Mladic.

General Michael Walker, accompanied by acting Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic and General Mladic's deputy, General Milan Gvero, toured the site for five bours and then told reporters be had had "what I would call a successful day."

A spokesman for the NATO-led Peace Implementation Force (IFOR) in Sarajevo also said the inspection appeared to have been a success.

The rebel Serbs had refused over the weekend to give way to a NATO demand for full access to the Han Pijesak base, allowing inspectors to visit twn sites at the base but refusing access to a third.

However, they backed down on Monday after a meeting at Pale between Mr. Plavsic and several NATO officials including Secretary General Javier Solana.

It was not known where Gen. Mladic, indicted by the international criminal tribunal in the Hague on charges nf genocide and crimes against humanity, was during the time of the inspection.

Gen. Walker arrived from Pale, the Serb administrative centre, in mid-morning aboard a Lynx helicnpter escorted by three helicopter gunships.

With a team of NATO officials Gen. Walker visited the Crna Rijeka site then another at Luburica Polje.

He spoke briefly before heading hack to Sarajevn after the inspection. "We have agreed how to put right the areas that we recognised between the RS (Republika Srpska) army and IFOR," he said. "We were interested in making sure that we have access to the site."

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher meanwhile conceded that Bosnian elections are unlikely to meet northern European standards, with particular concern over the prevention of refugees voting in their home towns.

But Mr. Christopher, embarking on a week of Balkan diplomacy, said it was essential to hold the Sept. 14 vote and he would spend the next month trying to ensure that it met the highest possible standards "under the circumstances."

Mr. Christopher flew to Brussels on Monday for meetings on Tuesday with NATO leaders. On Wednesday he will meet the presidents nf Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia in Geneva, and on Thursday he will pay a short visit to Bosnia itself.

Speaking to reporters aboard his plane from Washington, Mr. Christopher declined to say whether the elections would be free and fair as laid down in last November's Dayton peace agreement which ended more than three years of war in Bosnia.

But he said: "I think it's essential the electinns gn forward" in order tn create institutions for the new two-part Bosnian state agreed at Dayton, consisting of a Muslim-Croat federation and a Serh "repuhlic."

"We have got just about a month ahead in which more work can be done so that the electinns can reach the highest standards possible under those circumstances," he said.

"No one has thought that the elections would be perfect, nr that they can be judged the standards of, say, northern Europe

I think the elections will be a very strong unifying factor within the country."

Mr. Christopher said the background of war and ethnic hatreds in Bosnia made it unlikely the elections would meet the standards of countries with long-standing democracies.

"The confidence that people have to return to the areas from which they came is a place where we probahly won't achieve the level of perfection that we'd like to achieve," he said.

COLUMN 8

Andrew, Fergie spend vacation together

LONDON (AFP) — Prince Andrew and his former wife Sarah Ferguson are spending their holidays together at a chateau near Orleans, in central France, the British press reported Monday. The couple, who were officially divorced in June, flew to France by helicopter with their two daughters, Princess Beatrice, 8, and Princess Eugenie, 6, newspapers quoted friends nf the royal pair as saying. Prince Andrew, Queen Elizabeth II's second son, and "Fergie," as the Dncbess of York is known, have remained good friends despite several years spent living apart. Last year the two spent several days together on boliday in Spain. Recently they co-hosted a party for Beatrice's eighth hirthday at Prince Andrew's Berkshire home in Sunninghill Park, in southeastern Britain.

Magazine apologises to Tom Cruise

BONN (R) — A German magazine has apologised to Hollywood beart throb Tnm Cruise fnr an article it published that wrongly reported the 34-year-old sex symbol was unable to have children because his sperm count was too low. "Bunte has been informed that Tnm Cruise is not infertile and that his sperm count is completely normal. Bunte has no reason to believe anything else," the Burda Publishing Hnnse said in a statement issued late Mnnday night. "Bunte apologises to Tom Cruise and his family for this embarrassing and irritating incident," it said, adding that the journalist who conducted the interview would never work for the magazine again. Cruise filed a $60 millinn defamation lawsuit in Los Angeles this month over the article. Bunte acknowledged that "a significant portion" of the article misquoted the star actor. Cruise, now starring in the blockbuster movie Mission Impossible, is married to actress Nicole Kidman, who starred in Batman Forever and To Die For. The couple have two adopted children, Connor, 18 months, and Isabella, 3. Cruise rose to stardom in the 1983 movie Risky Business. His first hlockbuster movie was Top Gun in 1986 in which he played a devil-may-care fighter pilnt. He was nominated for an Oscar for his work as a Vietnam veteran in the 1989 film Born On The Fourth Of July.

French climber sets record in Himalayas

GRENOBLE, France (R) — French mountaineer Jean-Christopbe Lafaille has set a world record by climhing two Himalayan peaks more than 8,000 metres high (26,240 feet) in less than four days, his agent said Tuesday. Mr. Lafaille, 31, climbed Gasherbrum II, 8,035 metres (26,355 feet) high, then Gasherbrum I, 8,068 metres (26,463 feet), in the Baltoro region of Pakistan on July 28-31, agent Catherine Giry Devaux said. "No one has ever climbed two such summits in a row in such a short time, alone and without coming back to the base camp," she said. In 1984, Reinhold Messner and Hans Kammerland took seven days to cover the same route. Mr. Lafaille reached the top of Gasherbrum II "by the normal route and only 11 hours and 20 minutes after he had left the advanced base camp situated at a height of 5,900 metres (19,352 feet)," Giry Devaux said. The next day, he climbed the northwest slope of Gasherbrum 1.

Cyprus police launch hunt for youth's killers

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Cyprus police are trying to identify and track down Turks who clubbed to death a young Greek Cypriot during demonstrations on the island on Sunday, a government official said on Tuesday.

"If police manage to identify the suspects, then yes, I am going to instruct police to issue arrest warrants," Cypriot Attorney-General Alecos Markides told Reuters.

Tasos Isaac, 24, was beaten to death by a mob of Turks in the United Nations-controlled hnffer zone at the village of Dherinia, 100 kilometres southeast of the capital Nicosia on Sunday afternoon.

The killing was shown live on Cyprus television.

Isaac, one of several bundred Greek Cypriots who entered the hnffer zone tn protest against Turkey's occupation of the island, fell into barbed wire and was trapped as Turkish civilians descended on him with steel pipes.

"If the suspects are identified the warrants will be issued in all countries Cyprus has multilateral or bilateral agreements with for them to be extradited to face trial," said Mr. Markides.

The Cypriot government has said the killers were members of the right-wing Grey Wolves militant movement. Eyewitnesses said Turkish Cypriot police were also involved in the attack.

More than 50 people were injured on both sides of the divide from the clashes, the most violent in two decades.

Isaac's funeral, at state expense, was held at his home town of Paralimni in the southeast of the island on Tuesday.

The United Nations reacted angrily the violence.

"It is not the task of the Nnited Nations to control demonstrations, and its limited resources were stretched to the fullest on Sunday as they tried to control the fast-moving disparate gronps nf demonstrators on both sides, some of them armed, who entered the U.N. buffer zone simultanenusly in several areas," U.N. spokeswoman Sylvana Foa told reporters in New York.

'This responsibility belongs to the authorities on the island. Needless to say, it would have been better to prevent this kind of event, which does nothing to further efforts to find a durable solution to the Cyprus problem. They are very angry upstairs in (the Y.N.) peacekeeping (department) about this," she said.

But in Cyprus, Foreign Minister Alecos Michaelides told Reuters the U.N. statement "did not reflect the true facts.

"She fails tn state the shooting from the other side, that (Turkish) demonstrators were not there to demonstrate hut to kill. We have films showing the viciousness by which people were beaten with steel bars, one of whom was brutally murdered," he said.

Mr. Michaelides said he was alarmed that the United Nations did not mention the presence of members of the Turkish Grey Wolves militant group in the area.

"That is a vital fact. The Turkish side invited in these Grey Wnlves terrorists for a demonstration and Sylvana Foa neglects this. If the U.N. fails to make note of this it is like encouraging these terrorists to return."

Ms. Foa said although the Cyprus government persuaded a Greek Cypriot motorcycle association not to break through the ceasefire line en masse, as planned, "the Cyprus police acted slowly when groups of demonstrators breached the U.N. buffer zone in several places at the same time."

"The Turkish forces, at the same time, allowed Turkish Cypriot civilians armed with sticks and pipes to enter a military zone where access is normally restricted and to pass through into the U.N. buffer zone, where they clashed with the demonstrators," she said.

Despite efforts by the U.N. Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) to control the situation, "an estimated 70 civilians were injured on both sides and one Greek Cypriot demonstrator was beaten so severely that he died of injuries," Ms. Foa said.

Twn Irish U.N. civilian police officers went to the man's aid hut arrived too late, she said. Twelve members of the U.N. force were injured, including two Irish civilian police officers, one member of the Hungarian contingent and nine from the Austrian contingent, she added.

UNFICYP was investigating the clashes, Ms. Foa said.

Asked how much of a setback the incident was for the stalled Cyprus peace process, Ms. Foa said: "People feel that tensions have been increased...However, at the same time,sometimes a tragedy like this can hring people quickly to their senses, and they might just now take advantage of this to sit down and start these talks."

Lebanese parliament approves election law

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's parliament on Tuesday approved a draft parliamentary elections law to replace a law declared invalid hy the constitutional court, hut opposition deputies immediately said they would appeal against it.

"The law has been approved," Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri said after a two-hour extraordinay session of parliament discussing the draft law quickly prepared by the government on Friday, a day after the nld nne was struck down by the court.

The only change ordered hy parliament tn the new law was adding a phrase that leaves the door open for the Syrian-backed gnvernment to change the dates of the five election rounds, which nfficials had said would begin on Sunday.

Some deputies said after the ruling that they will lodge a new appeal with the court to have the new law declared invalid, arguing it differed little from the nld law by keeping electoral divisions seen as discriminatory against opposition Christians.

The old law had stirred a storm of protest and was petitioned against as discriminatory by 10 Christian and Muslim leftist opposition deputies — a rare challenge to the government.

The court had approved the deputies' petition and annulled an article in the old law that made an exception of the Christian heartland of Mount Lebanon by splitting it into six small districts. It also joined two South Lebanon constituencies into one voting area.

The new law passed by parliament kept the electoral divisinns nnted in the old law but said they would be for "one exceptional time."

Christian oppositinn leaders have said that these electoral divisions make it more difficult for the minority community to elect representatives opposed to the presence of 35,000 Syrian troops in Lebanon who give Damascus a major say in Beirut.

The Christian minority, most of which alnng with many Muslims boycotted polls in 1992 partly in protest at the Syrian military presence, is deeply split now over whether to vote in the new polls.

Muslim leftist Deputy Habih Sadeq told Reuters at least seven opposition depnties had asked him to prepare the new appeal on Tuesday. Any appeal to the court needs the signature of 10 deputies.

"This law is unconstitutional and its justifications for the exceptinnal circumstances are illogical," Christian deputy Marwan Ahu Fadel, another one of the 10 deputies who lodged the first appeal, told the house before it voted.

"This draft does not differ at all from the old one and should be subject to an appeal against it," Beirut Deputy Najah Wakim, a leftist Christian who signed the first appeal, said.

Seventy deputies out of 90 who attended the session voted for the draft law, while 18 vote against it and two abstained.

The Mount Lebanon split aims to assure election of former Druze warlord Walid Junblatt, a key minister allied to Syria and Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri.

U.S. intelligence was unprepared for Saudi bombing — report

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. intelligence operations were unprepared to deal with the threat posed to Americans serving in Saudi Arabia, where a truck bomh killed U.S. airmen on June 25, a congressional report says.

The bombing exposed "the shortcomings of a U.S. intelligence apparatus that left Americans unprepared for the threat that confronted them," said a draft report hy the staff of the House of Representaives National Security Committee. It was nhtained by the publication White House weekly and puhlished in its Monday edition.

"The ability to acquire and process accurate and timely intelligence is critical tn the successful execution of any military missinn," the draft said.

The report did not detail where the communication process broke down.

But it was critical of the 90-day rotations of American personnel, saying that hurt the ability to establish ongoing, stable relationships with Saudi security officials.

"Because the various sensibilities of the host nation often complicate the mission of U.S. forces, some of these organisational shortcomings are a growing hallmark of 'temporary' or 'contingency' missions that in reality become long-term," the draft said.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon, in a statement to White House weekly, detailed efforts to improve security both before and after the bombing of the U.S. military housing complex in Dhahran.

Mr. Bacon said senior officers' tours of duty were lengthened before the bombing. Since then, he noted, operations have been moved to more secure locations in Sandi Arabia.

An Israeli official said American intelligence services believe that Iranian-backed Lebanese guerrillas may have been involved in the June bombing of a U.S. barracks in Saudi Arabia that left 19 airmen dead.

"We have information confirming that American agencies believe that Hizbollah was involved" in the attack in Dhahran, said a senior nfficial in the prime minister's office, speaking on condition nf anonymity.

The nfficial added that Israeli intelligence "do not yet have any details of who was involved in the bombing."

U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry hinted earlier this month that Iran may be behind the terrorist strike and warned the U.S. would take "strong action" against any nation linked to the bomhing.

Hizbollah, which is financed and controlled by Iran, has been waging a guerrilla war against Israeli troops in South Lebanon for over a decade.

The Maariv daily quoted Israeli sources sa saying chances for an American strike against Iran in coming months would be high if an official announcement was made hlaming Hizbollah.